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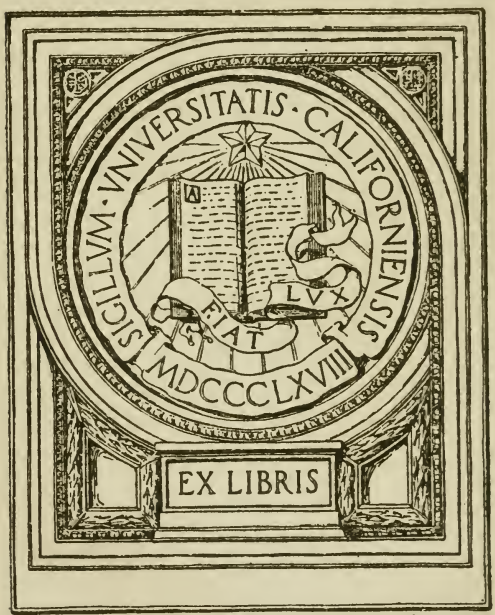


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# *Modern Sermons by World Scholars*

VOLUME VII

MOOREHEAD TO PORTER

# MODERN SERMONS
BY
# WORLD SCHOLARS

EDITED BY
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IN TEN VOLUMES
VOLUME VII—MOOREHEAD TO PORTER

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MOOREHEAD

MEN SENT FROM GOD

## WILLIAM GALLOGLY MOOREHEAD

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## MEN SENT FROM GOD

PRES. W. G. MOOREHEAD, D.D.

"*There was a man sent from God whose name was John.*"—John 1 : 6.

THIS is a short but significant description of the mission of John the Baptist. Few men whose names appear in the Bible receive such honorable mention as he. His place in the divine record is most conspicuous and the commendation of him unqualified. He whose judgment is always exact, founded as it is on His unerring knowledge of men, declared him to be a prophet and more than a prophet: of women-born none was greater (Luke 7 : 25-28). His coming and his ministry were the subject of prediction centuries before he appeared in the world. His birth was supernatural, as truly so as that of Isaac, for he came to gladden the hearts of his parents when they were old and well-stricken in years. His name of John was given him by the angel who announced his birth to his astonished father in the Temple.

That which arrests attention in this verse and which is its prominent feature is the fact that John the Baptist was sent from God and by God into the world. His ministry was of heavenly origin, and himself likewise was

heaven-sent. Both himself and his mission were of divine appointment and ordainment. John seems to have regarded this as the chief part of his commission, and he refers to it again and again as the essential feature of his life and work (comp. John 1 : 33; 3 : 28; Mark 1 : 2). The same thing is made prominent in the prophecy which announced his advent (Mal. 3 : 1). This, then, is the main idea in the text, viz.: a man sent from God. But this element, so marked in his case, is not peculiar or exceptional. It is also true of all who are commissioned to do God's work in the world. The mark by which they are distinguished, whether in Old or New Testament times, whether ancient or modern, is precisely this, they are men sent from God. Be it Moses or Samuel, Paul or Peter, Martin Luther or John Knox; be it any and every genuine servant of Christ in our own day; they are alike distinguished by this sign; they have divine authority for their mission.

Of those whom the Lord in His great mercy sends forth upon His errands there are two classes; the ordinary laborers whose ministry is occupied with the common duties, the every-day toil which the gospel imposes, without which all testimony for God would ultimately cease. We cannot rate too highly those faithful men whose lives are spent largely in quietness and obscurity and who are contented, even happy in their lot, and to whom the

Church and the world owe more than can ever be paid. Besides these who make up the vast mass of God's workers there are the extraordinary laborers who are raised up for special service, for supreme emergencies, and who are correspondingly equipped therefor. To this class, the extraordinary messengers of God, John the Baptist belonged, and it is of these we are to speak more especially.

One of the most precious gifts heaven bestows on the earth is a man with a message for his fellows. A man sent to deliver tidings of great joy, to acquaint us with God's thoughts and purposes about us, to pour light into our darkness, and to fill the heart with a song of gladness—what greater boon could be ours, or should be more acceptable? Such a gift ranks above every earthly good, ranks next to God's " unspeakable gift " with which indeed it is closely associated. And such men do now and then appear; genuine messengers from God, envoys extraordinary from the court of heaven. Their advents are occasional, their visits rare. Long stretches of time often lie between the presence of one and that of his fellow. Their coming is like that of the highest poets and heroes, infrequent and exceptional. There is no regular succession of them. Sometimes they appear in groups, and they deliver their messages contemporaneously, as in the deportation of the Israelites to Babylon when great prophets like Jeremiah,

Ezekiel, and Daniel were on the world's stage together; as in the beginning of Christianity when a whole cluster of them united in giving their testimony to men; as in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Sometimes one appears alone, as in the instance of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah. But whether in groups or singly, God in His gracious pity and love does ever and anon enrich our race with the gift of a man from Himself. To spend a little while in the company of such men is profitable. We cannot look, however inadequately, on a man sent from God without gaining somewhat from him. He is a living light-fountain which it is good and pleasant to be near, in whose radiance all souls must feel that it is well with them. On any terms whatsoever we should not grudge to stay for awhile in his neighborhood.

These men receive their commission directly from the Lord Himself. He furnishes them with their message and He equips them for their ministry. They are sent by Him, hence their mission is authoritative; they are sent from Him, therefore they have the needed gifts. Our Lord reserves to Himself the sovereign right to select and to commission His laborers. It is His prerogative as the Master in His own house, a prerogative that He has not delegated to any mere man or body of men. Thus He speaks, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you,

that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Thus likewise we are told that having ascended up on high "he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). All gifts and graces, offices and office-bearers flow from Him. Christ is the ruler in His own house under whose hand the order of the house proceeds and the servants, great and small, come and go. Primarily they are not man-made nor man-appointed. They receive not their commission from mitered priest, nor at the hands of Presbytery. The ministerial call and function are not imparted by any holy chrism or imposition of human hands, nor by education or theological lore. Properly speaking man has nothing to do with the great office save gladly to recognize what God in His sovereign good pleasure has given, chosen, and sent forth.

Two important results flow from this truth. One is this: they whom the Lord sends forth into His work are clothed with divine authority. The Lord Jesus invests His servants with the like authority He Himself has, for in His intercessory prayer He says, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also

sent them into the world " (John 17 : 18). He had His commission from God, the fountain and source of all power and lordship. His apostles share with Him in their appointment and mission. Wherever they go they carry with them heavenly credentials, and their message is authenticated by a power that is extra-human. It is not they who speak but the Spirit of their Lord. Men therefore listen to their voice, hang upon their words, follow them with joy that they may hear and learn, and have peace.

The other is this: their whole-hearted devotion to their great task. Each of these sent men is swayed by an impulse, a force that ever impels him to fulfil his mission, to finish his work. It is the burden laid upon him by his Master, a burden he cannot lift from his shoulders and would not if he could. It is the will, the voice of God heard in the central deeps of his being, ever insistent, urgent, irresistible. Paul refers to it in language that may well be that of every one sent of God: " Necessity is laid upon me; yea, wo is me if I preach not the gospel." That strange, compelling necessity drove him a glad and willing servant over much of Asia, over large sections of Europe, amid privation, suffering, victories and defeats, that he might make men know the love of God which surpasses knowledge. These men cannot do otherwise; they must accomplish their mission, fulfil their task, or

die. One of them, the prophet Jeremiah, actually sought to stifle the voice within his soul, and said to himself, I will speak no more, I will sit in silence and witness no more, but the mighty word within him became as a burning flame in his bones, he was weary of forbearing, he could not contain (Jer. 20:9). Ease, comfort, home often, wealth, social position, friends are all secondary, and are sacrificed without a pang of grief when they would thrust themselves between the man and his mission, when they would arrest his feet. He is God's messenger, and he cannot be stayed nor linger.

Men sent from God are endowed with the noblest talents and gifts. The magnitude of the errand upon which they come necessitates this. All workers for God may justly be said to be sent by Him, and by Him they are fitted for their task. But there come occasionally into our race those who create epochs in history, who set loose new forces that change the course of things, who become light-centers that fling their radiance far out into the surrounding darkness, whose life and teaching mold the thoughts and beliefs of generations. He who sends them takes care that they are supplied with the gifts and filled with the talents, the greatness and the difficulties of their mission demand. From their birth they are girded by Him with power. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his moth-

er's womb (Luke 1 : 15). The angel that announced his advent said, " He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah." He was born great; enriched with supreme gifts from the beginning. Thus, likewise, when Moses was born, we are told his parents hid him for they saw he was " a goodly child." In Heb. 11 : 23 we learn that they saw he was " a proper child." Stephen explains what the attractiveness in the face of the little Moses was that arrested the attention and aroused the hope of his parents—he " was exceeding fair " (Acts 7 : 20)—" beautiful unto God " is Stephen's fine term. There was that in his face which faith read, for God had set His stamp upon him and so parted him from other children. From his birth Moses had the marks of one chosen of God and equipped with the most extraordinary talents. Amram and Jochebed interpreted the divine purpose which providence traced in the face of their gifted child, and they feared not the king's commandment.

The like supernatural endowment appears in the case of the prophets, notably in Jeremiah and Isaiah. We learn that Jeremiah was set apart to his high office before he began to exist. His choice as the messenger of God antedated his birth. As his mission was to be a most unwelcome and perilous one, a ministry of admonition and of antagonism, God fitted him for it by the richest bestow-

ments. He was to be the solitary fortress, the column of iron, the wall of brass, the one immovable figure standing athwart the path of the apostatizing nation, struggling to arrest and turn them back; and he was girded with the strength his hard mission imposed. In the remarkable vision of Isaiah (Chap. 6) the prophet saw the Lord high and lifted up and heard the ceaseless chant of the seraphim, and he fell on his face overwhelmed with the sense of his own and his people's sinfulness. His cry was, "Wo is me! for I am undone." The swift seraph laid the flaming coal from the altar on his defiled lips. Thereby his pollution was purged away, and the marvelous style and sublime diction which have entranced the world were created. The like equipment is seen in the primitive Christian disciples. The Spirit in the form of disparted tongues of fire sat upon each of them. It was the fulfilment of the promise that they should be endued with power from on high. It symbolized the supernatural gift of speech, of burning, invincible speech that none could gainsay or resist.

We find evidences of an impartation of extraordinary gifts for extraordinary service, in other men whose names are not recorded in the Scriptures. One or two examples must suffice. The first is Martin Luther. A child of the people, of obscure and humble origin, the son of a miner, all his ancestors back to his

great-grandfather peasants, without fame or fortune, Luther was set to grapple in a death-struggle with the most gigantic power, the most consummate organization in existence. What were his gifts that he single-handed should smite the Colossus to the ground, free the race from its cruel domination, unchain the Bible and give it unfettered to the world? God was in the mighty struggle, we cannot doubt; it was His battle, not Luther's alone, and His was the victory. But He took care that the man sent to accomplish the mighty task should be girded with His strength. If the trenchant words of John smote on the ears of Israel as a voice from the other world and stirred the heart of the nation, we may well say with Richter that Luther's words were "half battles." He flashed out illumination from him; his striking idiomatic phrases and sentences pierced to the very heart of the controversy. There was in him insight, profound insight that betokens genius and more than genius, even the presence and the power of the Spirit of God. Frenchmen do not appreciate perhaps how much they owe to John Calvin and his fellow reformers, as Beza and Farrel, for the copious, firm, precise and accurate speech they wield with such elegance and power, just as the English-speaking people but feebly recognize the debt they owe to John Wyclif, John Knox, and William Tindale for our splendid English tongue.

The same truth is seen in the equipment of William Carey, the pioneer in modern missions. Sydney Smith sneeringly named him the "consecrated cobbler." A maker and mender of shoes he was, and he honestly and heroically maintained his family thereby when the little flock of Christians to whom he ministered could but scantily support him. Notwithstanding the pressure of poverty, he managed to acquire Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and a goodly amount of other useful knowledge, especially in natural history and botany. But it was in India that his true mission opened to him, and his marvelous capacity for the mastering of difficult languages was displayed. His translation of the Bible, in whole or in part, either alone or with others, into some twenty-six Indian languages; his Serampur press rendering the Scripture accessible to more than a hundred million human beings; his composition of grammars and dictionaries of several tongues; his professorship of thirty years at Fort William College in Calcutta—all this and much more exhibit something of the marvelous talents with which God had enriched His servant, William Carey.

Two lessons we may learn from the facts thus set forth. One is, that no emergency or crisis in human affairs finds God unprepared. He has His chosen instruments ready for every circumstance and every exigency that

may arise. Even the fall of Adam was not a surprise, nor was redemption an afterthought. When Messiah is about to appear among men His forerunner is sent to prepare His way for Him. When Egyptian bondage has reached its climax, then Moses arrives. Grateful Jewish hearts have coined the magnificent proverb that has cheered many an oppressed one since: "When the tale of bricks is doubled and there is no straw, then Moses comes." When the papal cup of abomination was brim-full and running over, heaven-sent men struck the filthy thing to the ground. When the gospel was to be carried to the regions beyond, when the age of missions had arrived, William Carey and Adoniram Judson were sent forth, and the churches of Britain and of America sprang to their feet to help in the blessed work. "God never is before His time, He never is too late."

The other lesson is, that the Lord alone can impart the gifts needed for extraordinary service. No man nor body of men can bestow them. Money can not buy them. Station furnishes them not. Education cannot secure them. They cannot be bought nor wrought by the hand of man. Education may whet the scythe, it cannot make it.

Another characteristic of such men is that they receive special training from the Lord Himself.

It is not enough that they be endowed with

great natural talents and capacities; they must enter God's school that their powers may be developed, their acquaintance with Him and His truth be made sure and absolute. They are always sent to that school and set down to those lessons which will fit them for their tasks. John the Baptist was in the desert until his showing unto Israel. His wilderness sojourn was one of thirty years. God led him there and there schooled and disciplined him for his dangerous and difficult mission. There in the profound solitude afar from the enervating influences of hollow formalism and artificial life, with none near but God, his spirit was chastened and tempered for the solemn duties that awaited him. This is characteristic of all sent of God. When He would fit His servants for some vast work requiring spiritual might and heroic self-sacrifice, He takes them afar from the distracting cares of the world to commune with Himself in the grandeur of solitude. Forty years Moses spent in the desert of Midian, a keeper of sheep, the best years of his life wasted utterly, worldly wisdom would say—but rashly. That sojourn qualified Moses to become the deliverer of Israel, the leader of the Exodus, the conqueror of Egypt and the lawgiver of his nation. His education in Pharaoh's court might be valuable; this of the wilderness was indispensable. "All the wisdom of Egypt" could not have prepared him for his future

path. No man is fit to do God's work who has not had some training with the Lord Himself. Nothing can take its place, nothing make up for its loss.

All God's servants have been taught in this stern school. Elijah at Cherith, Ezekiel at Chebar, David in exile, Paul in Arabia, Savonarola in St. Mark's Convent, Luther in Erfurth, are eminent examples of the immense value of being taught of God. The divine Servant, the Lord Jesus, spent by far the largest part of His earthly sojourn in the privacy and obscurity of Nazareth. Even in His public ministry He often retreated from the gaze of men to enjoy the sweet and sacred retirement of the Father's presence. None can teach like the Lord. The man whom He educates is educated, and none other. It lies not within the range of man's ability to prepare an instrument for the service of God. Man's hand can never mold "a vessel meet for the Master's use." Ordinarily great truths are not revealed to men in an instant of time; these are not thrust into the mind as if fired from a catapult. The truths a man can live and die on are wrought in the fires of the heart, in bitterest soul-agonies often, in plash of tears and sobs of secret longing. In silence and loneliness generally the true world workers are trained for their mission. Men who have learned to nurse their souls on truth in solitary meditation and communion with the

Invisible speak at length words that men must hear and heed.

A firm persuasion of the absolute truth of their message is another characteristic of those who are sent from God. It is conviction of its truth and more than conviction; it is assurance of faith profound, immovable, unalterable. God has spoken to them, and in the central deeps of their being His word is enshrined. More certain than life or death, more stable than the everlasting hills, firm as the throne itself, they know the message to be. We see this feature prominent in John. The period of the desert discipline was over; his difficulties and his struggles were ended. He had reached convictions, had learned truths on which to live and die, and he came forth from his retirement with his message, every word and syllable of which was to him a living verity, the eternal word of God. For in the solitude of the wilderness his spirit had been hardened into the temper a reformer needs. His locust food, his garment of camel's hair cloth, his indifference to worldly comforts, his contempt of luxurious ease, his separation and his loneliness, his bronzed face and unfaltering tongue, all told how real his ministry was. If ever men saw a sincere and genuine man it was John the Baptist. Now this is true of all men who are sent from God. Standing in the midst of a world full of uncertainty, of doubt and skepticism, they know

whom they have believed and what they affirm. Each of them uses the little but significant word "know"—"we know"; "I know." There is not the slightest taint of agnosticism in their creed; agnostics they are not nor can be. They have all caught a gleam of the infinite glory; to some of them, to almost all of them, the King in His beauty has been revealed; to them heaven itself has been opened, and the ineffable light has streamed down upon their faces. That light, that blessed vision is never forgotten; it stays with them to the end, through all their vicissitudes and their discouragements, their victories and defeats. They have received the message of God, have felt the powers of the world to come, the Spirit of God has borne witness with their spirits: therefore they cannot be flattered nor argued nor sneered nor persecuted out of their faith and their testimony.

This assured confidence of the infallible certainty of the message is what the world wants. Multitudes are weary and sick of speculations, of barren idealities, and hollow formalism. They want realities, not hypotheses, food, not husks nor stones. God's chosen messengers bear precisely such messages, and their faith in them is unwavering. They know that they know. It is easy to denounce the evil and evil tendencies of our age, and to extol the virtues and excellencies of former days. While there are not wanting

the evidence of much good, of genuinely heroic self-sacrifice on the part of multitudes of Christian men and women, it must sorrowfully be acknowledged that sinister assailants of no common sort threaten the cause and people of God on every side. There are principles and tendencies at work in modern society which if left unchecked will ere long result in disaster and ruin. A lawless drift is already on us, precurser of worse to come. Who does not perceive that the ax is already aimed at the chief hoops that bind together the staves of the civil polity? The restlessness under restraint, the revolt against authority and even law, the growth of agnosticism, the assaults on the Bible the anchor of all true religion, the prevalence of materialism, fostered as this is by the philosophy and the commercialism of the time, the enormous greed of those who have and who want still more, the deep ominous growl of those who have not, who want and will have—all this betokens the breaking down of the barriers and the near approach of the "falling away," the apostasy, of which prophecy speaks with most solemn warning (2 Thess. 2 : 3, 4). Men sent from God, with their living personal apprehension of God never perhaps were more needed than now; men who believe, with their whole mind and heart, soul and strength; believe, and endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

Some other features of these men may be grouped together and briefly treated. These are men of ardent love, of deep and abiding affection for their fellows. Paul had a continual heaviness and sorrow in his heart for his unbelieving countrymen. One may well doubt whether he had unalloyed happiness for a single day during the whole period of his Christian career. Wherever he went he carried this burden of grief, a heart full of tears. Nor was his solicitude confined to the descendants of Abraham. How pathetic are the terms in which he addresses certain Gentile converts who were slipping away from the truth and the liberty of Christ in which he had set them: "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you. . . . I am perplexed about you." "Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord." Knox's midnight cry, "Give me Scotland or I die," discloses the like passionate, tearful love and yearning. It reminds us of His tears who wept over guilty, impenitent Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Strength and courage are always found allied with the tenderest feelings and emotions. Luther could be as strong and fearless as a

lion in the presence of the great and mighty of earth, and yet be as a little child with children. He loved music, loved to sing his evensong, to play soft melodies on his flute. He delighted in birds, in the still starry nights, and in the flowers and shrubs and trees. Many a tree he planted with his own hands. Strong, courageous, but tender withal, and gentle as a little child. He used what seems in our day violent and awful words against the pope, against Henry VIII and against others, yet words that the circumstances demanded and the tyrannies and despotisms of these exalted potentates made necessary. He called them the swine of hell, and told them he, Martin, would grind their brazen foreheads into powder! He writes: "I have seen and defied innumerable devils. Duke George of Leipzic"—a great enemy of his—"is not equal to one devil. If I had business at Leipzig, I would ride into Leipzig, tho it rained Duke Georges for nine days running." "He lies there," said the Earl of Morton at Knox's grave, "who never feared the face of man." They may appear harsh, intolerant, these heaven-sent men, but it must never be forgotten that the mission imposed on them, the solemn, awful message they have to deliver, and their fidelity to Him who commissions them, forbid absolutely all softness, compromise, and pliability. The message as often contains lamentations and mourning and wo

as good tidings of great joy. It is the Lord's word they speak, and it is one of truth always, often of stern reproof and dreadful denunciation. Whatever the message, let it be ours to welcome the messenger, and be glad for the heaven-sent man.

MULLINS

THE GLORY OF CHRIST

## EDGAR YOUNG MULLINS

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## THE GLORY OF CHRIST

PRES. E. Y. MULLINS, D.D., LL.D.

*"We beheld his glory."*—John 1 : 14.

SOME years ago a painter who admired the moral beauty of Christ's character, but who refused to acknowledge that He was God, resolved to paint Christ's portrait from the evangelical records. For weeks he read these simple gospels and opened his soul to every suggestion of beauty and moral impulse, permitting himself to be moved and swayed by all the grandeur and radiance of that matchless life, knowing that only thus could he catch and reproduce on canvas the face he would portray. But in his process of sympathetic study of Jesus his unbelief slowly passed away. First one doubt and then another was consumed, burned up, so to speak, in the flaming splendor of that marvelous life, and ere long the painter bowed before Christ in adoration and worship. Like a man who has gazed into a holy mystery, he came forth among his friends, a look of wonder and of praise upon his face, and exclaimed, "I beheld His glory."

Men are denying to-day that Christ is divine. They are seeking to undermine that faith which has healed broken hearts, and has

destroyed the power of sin, and comforted the dying for two thousand years. It is well that we ask and answer the question, Was He what He claimed to be, the divine son of God and Savior of the world?

As evidence that Christ cannot be classed with other men, I invite your attention to the threefold glory of Jesus which we have beheld. First of all, we will glance at that glory as seen in the gospel records where the painter saw it.

If a meteoric stone should fall upon the calm bosom of the sea, the energy of its impact might be measured by the diameter of the circling waves which it would set in motion when those waves had reached their limit. So the claims of Jesus may be tested by the rôle He enacted while on earth and by the effects which He produced. Let us study, then, the circling waves of His power in a series of relationships sustained by Him.

Note, first, His relation to sin. He was Himself sinless. His inner life was a flawless mirror of stainless purity reflecting the image of God. He has challenged criticism for two thousand years to discover a flaw in His character. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" remains as He spoke it, the unanswered challenge of divine holiness. As has been said, He is the sun on which all the telescopes of time have failed to find a spot.

He was not only sinless—He forgave sin in

others. Well did His enemies accuse Him of blasphemy when He pronounced the words to the paralytic, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," unless indeed and in truth He was God, for God alone can forgive sins.

He transformed sinners. As a sunbeam falls on a mud puddle and draws up a drop of water into the clouds, distils it and purifies it of all foulness and sends it back as a snowflake, even so could He lay His finger on the stained life of a Magdalen and make it white as snow.

He shed His blood on the cross for the remission of sins, and He declared that remission of sins should be preached in His name to the end of time.

But sin is a violation of law, and this relation of sin raises another question, that of His relation to law. And so we find Him claiming to be lawgiver and king. "He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them," "Ye have heard it said, but I say unto you," are forms of speech familiar on His lips.

But law suggests a kingdom and a scepter and a throne. So we find that He is King of a new kingdom among men. He claims that His kingdom shall endure forever and He shall reign in righteousness.

But a kingdom set up on earth implies control of providential events. For how shall such a kingdom survive through the ages unless the ruler can control the course of his-

tory? Read the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew, and see how calmly He anticipates the course of history, of earthquakes and wars, of famines and pestilences. Yet He says he that endureth to the end shall be saved, and that He himself shall come again at the consummation.

Providence, again, is but part of a vaster system of nature. And we find that He is Lord of nature. He spoke to the water, and it blushed into wine; He spoke to the barren fig-tree, and it withered from the roots upward; He spoke to the loaves and fishes, and they were multiplied and fed the thousands; He spoke to the tempest, and it was hushed into silence. Nature was His servant. He was its Master.

Towards man He asserts the sublimest claims. He is the object of human faith; for Him all human ties must be severed if need be; for Him death is to be welcomed. He extends His arms and invites the race to come to Him for peace. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

How sublime is this role enacted by the Nazarene! And to crown it all, He claims equality with God. Before "Abraham was I am." "I and my Father are one." Well has it been said: Jesus was either God or a bad man; for He claimed to be God.

And how simple the picture in the gospels;

how consistent; how transparent and clear the story. His words about God are like the spontaneous warblings of some strange and wonderful bird. His deeds of power, His miracles of grace are as sparks emitted by some great fire. Yet how unaffected He is in it all! There is never any attempt at dramatic effect. In the moments of His greatest majesty He is as quiet and as unassuming as the shining of a softly beaming star. Homer's gods are represented as shaking the heavens by their least act. The poet produces his effects by physical disturbances when his gods stir. Jove gives an affirmative answer to a petitioner, and this is Homer's description of it:

"He spoke and awful bends his sable brows,
Shakes his ambrosial curls and gives the nod,
The stamp of fate and sanction of a god.
High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
And all Olympus to the center shook."

Contrast this with the quiet majesty and moral grandeur of Jesus stilling the tempest as He rises from His slumber and says to the rolling billows and raging winds, "Peace, be still." Sometimes He unites in a single act the perfectly human and the perfectly divine in His nature. Humility nestles up by the side of majesty. Grandeur is adorned by lowliness, and extremes meet in perfect harmony. He is worn out with toil and asleep on the

boat like any other, and in an instant stills a tempest. He stands weeping at the grave of Lazarus, like any other broken-hearted friend, and at once hurls the voice of command into the tomb and raises the dead to life. He allows Himself to be led away captive by his foes, but restores the severed ear of the high-priest's servant, and says to the impetuous disciple, "Knowest thou not that I could call to my side twelve legions of angels?" He allows Himself to be nailed to the cross, and to be laid away in the tomb, and then in undaunted might quietly opens his eyes and lays aside the grave-clothes, rises from the dead and ascends to the Father.

Surely we have beheld His glory in these pages, and any man will repeat the painter's experience who allows Christ's image, as there portrayed, to have room in his mind and heart. I have read the tragedies of Shakespeare, and awe and horror have fallen upon my spirit at their close; I have gazed upon the Sistine Madonna, that masterpiece of the artistic genius of Raphael, and a sense of beauty has mastered me. I have been swung on shipboard by the mighty rhythmic force of the ocean, and a sense of its power has filled me. I have gazed on a clear night at the dazzling splendor of the milky way, and adoration and humility have combined to sway my soul with emotion. I have stood on the Gorner Grat, surrounded by cloud-piercing sentinels of

snow-clad Alpine peaks keeping guard like tall archangels over diminutive man below, and wonder and awe have oppress me. But the image of Jesus Christ, as it towers in solitary grandeur before me in the New Testament surpasses them all. He inspires me with greater awe than Shakespeare, and greater majesty than ocean or Alps. He is more splendid than the milky way, and not afar from me, as it is, but near me. And if a human writer invented His picture as recorded in Matthew, then a Galilean peasant wears the literary crown of the ages and the genius of Raphael and Michelangelo pale into insignificance by the side of his. Nay, as Rousseau said, it would take a Jesus to forge a Jesus.

Again, " we beheld his glory " in history. The marvel of the ages is the Rock of Ages. The supremacy of Christ as compared with other teachers in all our civilization of the West is as the supremacy of the giant oak in the midst of a forest of saplings, or as the supremacy of the sun as compared with the planets in our solar system.

Dr. Fairbairn says, men have attempted in recent years to get rid of Christ in two ways. One is by critical analysis. They have taken the knife of criticism, and with it have cut and slashed at the gospel records, until one of them has said that there are but six or seven authentic sayings of Jesus in the entire New

Testament. The other way is by logical analysis. They have tried to show that the decisions of the early Christian councils declaring Jesus to be God are unreasonable and absurd. But when they have completed their destructive work and done their worst, there stands Christ towering above the troubled sea of human speculation and doubt like a great and lofty rock at whose solid base the angry waves foam out their rage and dash themselves in vain. There stands Jesus in the firmament of human hope like a star of the first magnitude, above the multitudes of hungering and sorrowing and sinning humanity, growing larger and brighter and more splendid with each generation, until to-day all over the earth the nations are in commotion as they gaze upward and point with the trembling finger of yearning and hope to Him as the lodestar of their lives.

Look for a moment at His achievements in history. See Him as He moves westward in the person of the apostle to the Gentiles. He kindles a flame of faith in the islands of the Mediterranean. He plants His banner at Antioch. He sweeps through Lystra and Derbe, and Asia Minor begins to prostrate herself before Him. He plants His foot in Ephesus, and Diana begins to totter from her throne. Restless, He crosses the Hellespont, and at Philippi, amid the quakings of the earth, He wins trophies. In Athens, amid

classic surroundings of the Acropolis and Parthenon and the chiseled beauties of Phidias and the glories of Praxiteles, His voice is heard calling men to repentance. At length in Rome itself He grapples with the world power. His crown flashes in moral beauty by the side of the crown of the Cæsars; His throne rises, mystic, silent and invisible, but mighty in its movement as the silent stars in the bending heavens. When the empire is broken up and barbarians come in hosts, sweeping like a conflagration over that ancient empire, He lays His hand on their untamed spirits. Clovis is converted. The Goths are evangelized. The Franks and Gauls and Scandinavians come bending to Him. England owns His sway. America, through cavalier and Puritan and Pilgrim, is founded, and when the feet of those men touch our shores, the " sounding aisles of the dim woods rang with the anthems of the free " and in praise of the Nazarene.

A humble prophet of Nazareth has done all this. He has done it by the use of a single principle—indeed, by means of one despised virtue, self-denial. The cross is the keystone in the arch of His power. It is a true saying that, as chemistry is organized around the principle of affinity, as political economy is based on the single idea of value, as astronomy owes its origin and progress to the one law of gravitation, so Christ founded His re-

ligion on the one idea embodied in the cross, dying to live.

See, then, how He dominates the world; not, indeed, perfectly yet, but with increasing power. Look at the great creeds of Christendom, the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, the Westminster, the Philadelphia and New Hampshire confessions of faith. He is the center of them all. If you should go through the forest with an ax and cut a ring around the great trees, all of them would die. To take Christ's name from these great creeds would be to do the same for them. They would wither, their leaves lose their life and color, their sap cease to flow. They would perish.

The Church is His monument. She has had a long and checkered career, sometimes persecuted and driven into the wilderness, sometimes unworthy of her high calling, but even to-day she is the fairest among ten thousand institutions and the chief glory of this earth.

The Lord's Supper, beautiful impressive memorial of His death, so simple that any child can understand it, yet so profound in its suggestions of divine love that no philosopher has ever fathomed its mystery to its depths, monument of quenchless love and gentle solicitude on His part and expressive of tender love on the part of His disciples, it stretches back through eighteen centuries to Calvary, filled with the aroma of His presence

at every step of the way, and shining to the eye of faith through the ages like a chain of roses bedewed with tears of saints and woven by the hands of angels.

He dominates the greatest art of the world. This fact has often been pointed out, and has become commonplace. Go yonder to the art galleries of Europe. Gaze upon those yards upon yards, and furlongs upon furlongs, and miles upon miles of flaming canvas, the very crown and blossom of human genius, and what do you see? His figure, His mother's figure, His brethren's figures, His disciples, His enemies. They portray Him as babe in Bethlehem with the light bursting from His infant form, as boy in the temple, as teacher, as cleanser of the temple, as healer, being raised on the cross, being crucified, descending, ascending to glory, judging the world. As I stand there gazing I interrogate those great masters, and from their graves I seem to hear the answer from Murillo and Rubens and Raphael and the rest. "It was He," they say, "who touched my brush with celestial fire; His hands mingled the colors, and His spirit inspired mine to its great achievements."

So, too, as I listen to the great masters of music, to Handel and Hayden and Beethoven, as the billows of harmony roll in upon me and catch me up and sweep me on, as the sublime strains of the "Messiah" take my spirit cap-

tive and chain me to the flaming chariot of triumphant melody, I seem to hear the master of composition say: "It was His breath through my soul which first fanned the flame of harmony; His hands first smote the chords of my being until they thrilled with the very echoes of heaven."

What shall I say more? He is in our modern life everywhere: in our political economy seeking justice in all industrial conditions, in our politics seeking to purge it of greed and graft, in our social life, in our literature shedding a moral radiance over it; in modern missions He is not yet conqueror, but He presides over the struggle.

"Careless seems the great avenger.
History's pages but record
One death grapple in the darkness
'Twixt false systems and the Word.

Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
But that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth Christ within the shadow
Keeping watch above His own."

In the third place, we have beheld His glory in the realm of Christian experience. His glory shines on the pages of the New Testament. It rises to a new brilliancy as He marches triumphantly through history. But for the individual believer, that glory attains

to its noonday splendor in the experience of his own heart.

Christianity adopts the scientific method of demonstration, viz., the method of experiment. Christian experience means Christian experiment. Make a trial of Christ and He will prove to you that He is real, a living Christ doing a divine work in the soul.

We have all seen the triumph of Christ in debased lives, men and women plucked as brands from the burning. A diamond and a piece of charcoal are essentially the same thing, or at least diamonds were made of charcoals; in her own mysterious workshop nature accomplishes this wonder. That is interesting, but it would be far more interesting if my scientific friend could tell me how I can transform charcoal into diamonds. Now this is the glory of Christ, that He does just that. Jerry McAuley was a charcoal, and Christ changed him into a diamond. S. H. Hadley, the bum, the drunkard and reprobate, was a black piece of charcoal, and so was George Muller, of England, who began life as a burglar. Christ touched their lives and made them spiritual jewels, fit to adorn His own crown of glory.

Christ predicted that He would do just that. He said that men would believe on Him, that prayer in His name would open the gates of Paradise, that a cup of water given in His name would have eternal reward. What a magic name it is to-day in its power to renew



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human lives! According to the old story, George Washington while a boy went into his father's garden one morning in spring and found to his wonder and delight that his name was growing on a garden bed, spelled out by the plants. His father, of course, had planned the surprise for George. But suppose the father had foretold that hundreds of years later his name, Washington, would be found spelled out by growing plants in other garden beds, and suppose the prophecy had come true, then we would conclude that he was in league with the cosmos, that he had supernatural power. Now Jesus has done a more wondrous thing. He predicted that His name would be written in human hearts to the end of time, and that that name in the garden of the soul would keep it clean from weeds and briars, and to-day tens of thousands of men and women are witnesses to His power.

Experiment, I say, not in the vainly curious fashion, but in the high aim of moral purpose. Try Christ thus and He will give the proof of His power. The school children will recall the way the books prove that we have a blind spot. Hold a white piece of cardboard with black marks on it before the eyes, and move it up and down and back and forth until when it reaches a given point the black marks will vanish. Try this and prove it. Now Christianity says turn the soul towards Christ in all sincerity, and suddenly it will appear that

you have not a blind but a seeing spot. You will behold His glory. A young woman scientist who was a skeptic denied Christ's resurrection. The pastor in the neighborhood told her to give up speculation and try experiment, offer herself to Christ. She returned soon with radiant face, exclaiming, " I cannot yet prove by argument that Christ arose from the dead, but I know He is alive, for He has come to me and manifested Himself to me." She beheld His glory in the holy place of experience.

Here, then, is the ground of our confidence. First, we believe because, as Professor James says, we will to believe, or because the Bible tells us to believe, or because some friend witnesses to us of Christ's power. But at length we believe because of what He does in us and for us. That is the reason why destructive criticism cannot fundamentally shake our confidence in the Bible. In it we find reflected our own experience. If I look into a mirror which changes or distorts my face, I know it is an untrue mirror, but if it gives me back my own image, I know the mirror is true. Such a mirror is the Bible. It reflects truly my spiritual image.

Blind Bartimaeus, of Jericho, was healed by Jesus, and Dr. Dale has suggested that conceivably his faith at first was based on the healing of the man born blind in Jerusalem, of which he had heard. Imagine a doubter seeking to destroy his faith by calling in question

the story of the man in Jerusalem who was healed. "The story looks suspicious," says the skeptic. "Why did Jesus put clay on the man's eyes, and send him off to wash in a pool? There must have been fraud somewhere." What answer would Bartimaeus have given to such a doubter? He would have pointed to his own eyes. He would have declared, as the other declared, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." I see the fair forms of nature and they all tell me I am no longer blind. The daisies that blossom at my feet, they tell as I gaze at their beauty that I am no longer blind; the white blossoms on the trees, the bloom on the grapes, and the hues of the pomegranate; the blue haze on yonder mountain, the fiery splendor of yonder evening cloud, and those burning stars above—these all are my witnesses; the faces of my friends which I now see, of my brothers and sisters, and the dear face of my mother—these all are my witnesses, all this beautiful wondrous earth of God's, fashioned by His fingers, all proclaim my testimony. Yes, yes, I believe not because of what Jesus did to someone else, but because of what He has done to me that He is the divine son of God. I have beheld His glory with the eyes to which He unlocked the gates of light and bade me enter.

This, then, is the witness of experience, and every believer knows what it is in some measure. I went to Him in my bondage and sin,

and He broke off the shackles and set me free. I went to Him in doubt and perplexity, and the light of day fell on my darkened path; in the lonely night of sorrow when friends and helpers failed me, He came into my life and bound up my broken heart. In doubt and despair and dread of the future, He gives me life and hope. We have seen His glory, then, on the pages of the New Testament record. It has flashed before us through eighteen centuries of history, as the rider on the white horse went forth conquering and to conquer. That glory has also shone forth within us, and we see it in the lives of others. We have seen it as it breaks forth in the faces of the dying who in His name greet death with a triumphant shout, and we seem to catch it in the notes of the redeemed host above who sing His praises and who proclaim that they owe their victory to Him, and shall spend eternity in telling it.

# OMAN

## THE BEAM AND THE MOTE

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## THE BEAM AND THE MOTE

PROF. JOHN OMAN, D.D.

*"Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."*—Matt. 7 : 5.

THIS saying is what is usually called a hyperbole. That is to say its effect is derived from a conscious and evident exaggeration. A straw in the eye is impossible, a beam is outrageous. Were we quite honest with ourselves, should we not find it equally exaggerated as a moral judgment? We escape by restricting it to the Pharisees. But the Pharisees were not specially the object of it, and, moreover, they were quite respectable, religious people like ourselves. We should never forget that it is precisely a judgment on the Pharisees that may specially concern us nominally Christian people. In that case would you not utterly reject and even utterly resent the description as a simple and final account of yourself and your neighbor? Your fault is not a beam, and, with all charity, his is not a mote. Every one has faults, and you may be a little quicker to detect them in other people than in yourself, for that is human nature. You are not, however, stone blind and you are quite right in believing yourselves

tolerably truthful, honest, upright persons, which can by no means be said of all your neighbors. It is regarded by some people as right to speak of themselves as being desperately wicked, as being all wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, as having no right word in their mouths and no right thought in their heads; but the mere cant of it all appears in the bitterness with which they would resent it, if it were said directly to them in other than Scripture language. You are quite right in not wishing to use mere phrases about yourself more than about others. You are not double-dyed scoundrels. You have never descended to the depths you have too often seen others reach. You have not drunk to excess as many do. You have not disregarded all rules of honor and decency. Your business principles are at least tolerably fair. You have done well by your family and not been altogether neglectful of public duty. You may not so much as wish to be described as a very religious person, yet, compared with many you know, you might even claim attention to your religious duties. However, you have never pretended to be what you are not. Such pretense has not, certainly, been one of your temptations. Why then speak with such exaggeration, and, above all, why apply to you the hateful word hypocrite?

Nevertheless it is the Master's simple and final judgment on you. It is not our usual

judgment on ourselves. It differs from all current standards. The man who receives it, understands that he is dealing with the judgment, not merely of the best of men, but with the mind of God, with the ultimate, heart searching, indisputable eternal judgment. Furthermore, not till we accept it, can we make any right beginning with the will of God for our salvation or the salvation of others.

The motes in the eye may be many: the beam can only be one. To our Lord it is hypocrisy. Now hypocrisy has two aspects, one in respect of things and the other in respect of persons; our relation to human souls being even more vital for our veracity than our relation to what we abstractly call truth; consequently we have to concern ourselves about just two fundamental virtues—about truth and about justice. Let us ask ourselves without exaggeration, yet, if possible, without evasion, how it stands with us in respect of truth and justice. They are ordinary fundamental virtues, for you cannot say anything worse of a man than that he is a liar and a thief.

How then does it stand with us, first, in respect of truth? Few things are more contemptible than falsehood, and no one is more untrustworthy than a liar. That is true, even if it be only careless lying, even if it spring only from mere love of babbling. It is a mote in the eye so distorting, that the person who has it never can distinguish between a true

story and a false. Many can never tell the same story in the same way, and what is strangest of all, never can see that he is anything himself but a miracle of reserve, silence and caution. When to this love of talk is added an artistic love of improving a story—a thing more simply accomplished by exaggeration—whole romances can grow out of hints, portentous events out of simple happenings, a mountain of gross misrepresentation out of a molehill of fact. Unquestionably that may be a very large and distracting mote in thy brother's eye.

Worse still than the careless lie is the self-interested lie. The simplest, least reflective form of it has a quite amazing effect in perverting the mind. It may seem a trivial matter when a servant girl always has a convenient lie handy for every mischance, a shopkeeper becomes glib in assuring you that you cannot get the same article elsewhere for double the money, or a vain person acquires the habit of putting haloes on his relations and exalting his own doings to the borders of the heroic; but the task of clear thinking and of accuracy, the whole slack dealing with truth is never a small moral perversion. By allowing themselves such indulgences, there are people who come to feel truth in every form to be inimical to their interests, and never tell it, if by any device they can deflect from it.

Nor can interested falsehood always offer

the excuse of want of reflection, poverty stricken as that excuse may be. No one can look around him and question that there are men whose whole lives seem to be a deliberate attempt to profit by deceiving others. Consider all the lying advertisements and prospectuses, consider the whole parasitic world which lives on the gullibility of human nature. Surely that is a large enough mote in your neighbor's eye!

And worse still is the malicious lie. In the Old Testament no iniquity is more strongly denounced. The poison of asps is in the tongue of the slanderer. In the New Testament James says that such a tongue is set on fire of hell. Slander now is more insinuating and less obvious, and we have lost somewhat of that fierce sense of its malice, but its hints, evasions, calculated understatements are as cruel and as venomous as hell. What else can put a man so far away from that love which believeth all things and hopeth all things, which is not only God's truth, but God Himself? What could there be more perverting, more blinding in the eyes of mortal man?

In contrast to all this, you indulge in no wild misstatements, your memory is fairly accurate and disciplined, your expressions never greatly exaggerated. On any ordinary standard you have a right, a wholly undeniable right, to regard yourselves as fairly truthful persons. Now truth has been rightly called

the root of all the virtues, just because it must be the first and the supreme condition for seeing clearly, for seeing everything as God sees it. Such a vision is what our Lord means by an eye without beam or mote. The resolve to have our vision clear, at all costs to see ourselves, life, duty, all truth as God sees it, must be the beginning of right turning to God. But in that case truthfulness must mean utter truthfulness of the whole nature, utter openness to reality, utter determination to deal with things as they are, and not as you wish them to be. If so where do you stand? What of that shallowness, that lightness which hates to be reminded of the deep, solemn, sad, awful things which lie under the surface of life? What of the habit of blinking the facts which are most urgent and most sure—death and sin and eternity and God? What of that willing bias towards self-delusion, which assumes so many guises, so many respectable and highly approved disguises? What, above all, of the inward truthfulness of nature which shuns the hidden things of shame, being ashamed to cherish in the heart what it would be ashamed to have known, and which finds no comfort in thinking evil hidden from the eye of men, because its purpose is to be open and manifest in the sight of God? What we are all called upon to realize is the immense, the overwhelming power of self-deception, for hypocrisy is just the self-deception which lies in easy, con-

ventional, self-satisfied ways of thinking, over which our religion hangs like a shadowing cloud, but never as an illuminating pillar of fire. The ordinary lie, ugly, mean, contemptible, malicious as it is, is a small thing and does not half as much obscure from us the naked truth of God as just this self-satisfied conventional judgment of ours which accepts the ordinary moral standard of our class, which looks on life with the spectacles of custom, which never once tries to fathom what God has put into life and what He is saying to us through life.

Our religion, instead of being a trumpet call to awaken out of sleep, has become part of this easy, prosperous, conventional life, into which a real understanding of the Master's teaching would enter as a thunderbolt.

Now let us see in the second place, how it stands with us in respect of justice. If there is anything you would resent more than being called a liar, it would be to be called a thief, yet " thy brother " may be unfortunately a common thief. In the cathedral of Strasburg when the people gather at twelve o'clock to see the wonderful clock, a priest keeps shouting at intervals in French, German, and English, " Beware of pickpockets." What a remarkable and alas necessary commentary on humanity! Now imagine yourselves watching your neighbor's admiration, possibly his worship, to find opportunity for robbing him!

The idea is almost beyond your power to conceive.

Nor have you any part or lot with that more specious kind of thieving which keeps within the letter of the law and which yet "conveys, the wise it call," as Falstaff says with vastly great success. It may not be always easy to draw the line absolutely between what is honest and what is dishonest in business, but there are many things bearing that honorable name, indefensible on any standard. You are not in any way like the men who knowingly and wilfully are implicated in such transactions. You would neither feel yourselves justified by custom nor by legality, but hold that the more extensively and the more safely money is "conveyed" out of one man's pocket into another's, the worse morally is the robbery.

You have no desire to grow rich by preying on your brother's simplicity, and you have good reason for believing that you are equally free from profiting by his distress. Your blood boils at the very thought of the employer whose fat fortune rests on the toil of weary seamstresses working for a miserable pittance under the bitter compulsion of cold and want of bread.

Moreover, you have never been touched by the gambler's temper which seeks gain by any kind of happy fortune, careless of where a corresponding loss must necessarily fall. Nay,

you go far beyond all this and have a positive doctrine of life which sees that in every walk the man who keeps his eye steadily on the profit, to the neglect of the services which ought to merit it, has a gambler's heart and is no honest man.

You can rightly claim, then, to be an honest man in this matter, and it is no small claim. But we are not yet done with what ought to be accorded you in respect of justice. You have never restricted justice to a mere matter of honest bargaining. The person, for example, who is wilfully rude to a person not in a position to resent it, is not just; deliberate readiness to hurt the feelings of others is a disregard to God shown in disregard to the creatures He has made in His own image, which is the very essence of sin. Quite manifestly it must be a mote large and distorting in any eye that attempts to see the highest and holiest in life as God sees it.

You have good reason for believing that you are free from that brutal form of self-assertion, and you strive at least never to do to those below you what you would resent from those above you. To appraise oneself by one's advantages of wealth and position and make others feel it by word or gesture is to you an especially offensive form of self-assertion. You have enough Christianity at least to believe that God has made of one blood all classes of men and you try, so far at least as the ordi-

nary forms of society will permit, to deal with all men in accordance with that conviction.

But if these evils are only the motes, what can the beam be? The motes may be many, the beam is only one—what we found in respect of truth—a superficial, self-satisfied, conventional self-regard which will not be too much disturbed. None of these things spoken of sum up justice, which the Greeks regarded as the sum of all the virtues, and which Paul took to be a righteousness which alone was worthy to clothe an immortal soul before God.

We, on the contrary, seldom speak of justice, preferring benevolence. Justice leaves no sense of merit; benevolence affords a gratifying sense of having done more than was absolutely required. The Roman Catholics, be it remembered, are not alone in seeking comfort from works of supererogation. What a pleasant superior feeling, for example, is paying subscription dues, compared with paying a debt. And this we cherish too in the name of Jesus Christ, who, if we understand Him at all, has reduced such a claim of merit to dust, and left us with nothing before God but an infinite, unpayable debt. Here is the beam which obscures your vision of all right fellowship and consideration and kindness and brotherly love.

Does it not begin with your whole estimate of yourselves, which is corrupted by that subtle, diffused injustice which thinks of privi-

lege as merit, not as responsibility? In God's eyes who grants them, better social advantages, better education, more leisure to cultivate the graces, greater ability can have one just effect—humbler, kinder, more helpful, more considerate service to men in proportion as they are less privileged.

When you say even of the wicked, they have made their beds and must lie on them, forgetting all the kind people who, often with very little help from yourself, have made your bed for you, are you just? When you forget to ask what you are worth to the world for all the blessings God has showered upon you, and simply think highly of yourself for being so blest, are you just? When you forget your responsibility for the higher gifts—talents, knowledge, skill, peace, grace—and ascribe them to yourself as merits and not to God as responsibilities, and use them for yourself and not for your brother, are you just? Till you have felt with the apostle that you are debtors for the whole grace and joy and peace of the Christian life, debtor to all men, debtor most of all for the greatest gifts, debtor to pay God in the only way He can be paid, through His children, are you just? Is spiritual selfishness better than material selfishness? Yet in our habit of stopping at ourselves and not going on to God, we readily and without pain of conscience, cherish both.

It is all the same beam whether it concerns

truth or whether it concerns justice. The Master calls it hypocrisy. "Thou hypocrite!" Hateful word! Nevertheless there it is—an actor, one who lives by masquerading, who is satisfied with the show of things, who refuses to build on the bed-rock of reality! A hypocrite is not necessarily a deliberate deceiver, but more frequently is wilfully self-deceived. Hypocrisy is not deliberate pretense, but wilful shallowness and conventionality and superficiality of judgment, which resents truth and reality the moment they disturb self-satisfaction, which feeds the pride and not the humility on its benefits, which in short stops short at judging itself before men and according to the common standard, without going on to judge itself before God according to the whole measure of the responsibility and loyalty required in those who have nothing they have not yet received.

From this springs the hypocrisy which accepts convention for truth and externalities for God's final moral judgment, and which hinders us from finding God either in the life which God has given or in our brother whom He has made in His own image. This hypocrisy lies at the root of our failure both to know ourselves and to help our fellows. Both failures go together. We attack confidently the outward evil, the gross evil, the evil everyone sees, not humbly at all, or as if we ourselves had any part in it, but as if it were

simply an offense to us which we had a right to demand should be removed. Reform attempted in that spirit becomes a mere breach of kindness and truth and justice. Precisely because an evil can be seen, is it not the root of all iniquity which so obstructs our vision that we do not even recognize its presence? Nothing can avail till our thought regarding our own and our brother's merit is entirely reversed and we offer ourselves, not as those who condescend, but as those who are so infinitely debtors to God that they are debtors to all men.

To realize that, we must suffer God's judgment, the absolute judgment of truth and justice to pass upon us. It is not enough to ask to see ourselves as others see us, but we must ask to see ourselves as God sees us. To see ourselves thus we must above all be humbled by our privileges, not exalted; use God's gifts to open our spirits to God and not to ward off His judgment of us; rid ourselves in short of all the consolations of hypocrisy. Then and then only can we have the hunger and thirst after righteousness which God has promised to fill.

Yet mere human nature cannot face such a revelation. It cannot live in the naked light of truth and justice. It cannot live without the comfort of hypocrisy. We can only begin by suffering God to set us, not in the light of His cold judgment which we cannot endure,

but in the light of His love in Jesus Christ, where alone we can sincerely say, Search me O Lord and try my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me. Then, the beam being taken out of the eye, there can only be one prayer—God be merciful to me a sinner—and only one way of going to your home justified—not by works of righteousness which you have done, but by the sheer unmerited pardon and love of God.

There and there only all real helpful succor for others as well as salvation for ourselves must begin. We Christians have spoken much of the impossibility of reforming the evils of the world without a gospel to offer men; and then we are faced by the powerlessness of the Church, even with the gospel it offers. But it takes small reflection to see that the spirit of the gospel is not behind this offer of the gospel at all. It has not been a real gospel to us, taking the beam of hypocrisy out of our own eye and setting us in utter humility and gratitude before the pardoning, merciful love of God, henceforth to be debtors to all His children. Alas for us it is only a new ground for self-satisfaction, a new pinnacle from which we bend down to take the mote out of our brother's eye. In this hand stretched down to them from religious and moral heights, men naturally fail entirely to find the hand of the Friend of publicans and sinners, the very mark of whose gospel was that it was preach-

able to the poor, and for that matter, to the poor only. Moreover we cannot speak to the souls of men, regardless of rank, education, manners, morals, because it is not our souls the gospel has found, but only our superficial, conventional, respectable selves. This in every age, even when men have sought to help their fellows, has made them "trust that they were righteous and despised others," because, in short, it is only an attempt to take the mote out of our brother's eye, and, behold, a beam in our own eye.

ORR

THE ABIDING WORD

## JAMES ORR

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## THE ABIDING WORD

JAMES ORR, D.D.

*"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*—Matt. 24 : 35.

A WORD seems a light and fragile thing put in comparison with this mighty and glorious fabric of heaven and earth. "Heaven and earth," Jesus says, "shall pass away," yet nothing in itself might seem more unlikely. The first impression which the great objects of nature make upon us is that of strength, solidity, enduringness. The earth we tread on, the hills girding us, the rocks frowning down upon us, the stars in their nightly watch above us, all give the idea of objects which are the opposite of transient—which may be depended on to outlast all human generations.

And this at first sight seems the verdict of history. "One generation cometh and another goeth; but the earth abideth forever." The constellations which the Chaldean astronomer dim ages past noted in his book; the planets to which he gave their names; the Pleiades and Orion spoken of by Job; all meet the gaze of the student of the skies just as they used to do. The traveler, as he visits the spots famous in ancient history, marks the

mounds where lie buried the ruins of once great cities, and views the wasteness and desolation around, has the same reflection forced on him—the shortness of human life, the transiency of human affairs, and, as contrasted with this the enduringness of nature.

Over against this lasting reality of heaven and earth how frail, how perishable a thing seems a word! Of the numberless myriads of words spoken every day, how few have the faintest chance of living in memory even for an hour. Words, speaking generally, are the lightest, most trivial, most evanescent, least substantial of all entities. Words written are hardly more enduring than words spoken. Look at the mass of old books which cumber the shelves of any of our libraries, and ask the question, Who ever reads them? Our own day has its thick crop of authors and of books, but how many of them will be remembered or heard of twenty or fifty or one hundred years hence?

Yet Jesus says in this passage of the text that heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away. He deliberately puts His words in contrast with this mighty material fabric of the physical universe, and declares that while it is not eternal, His words are; that His words shall last while it perishes; that they are more enduring than it. It was a calm, great utterance, and the wonder of it is only increased when we think

of what Jesus was as He appeared to His contemporaries. In any ordinary man in Christ's worldly position such words would have been the height of madness; and so probably they would have been regarded by the Herods and Pilates and Caiaphases of his time. Yet history has verified this saying of Christ; His words have taken deeper and deeper hold upon the minds of men as the centuries have advanced; and thereby we have been taught to see the difference between Christ's outward seeming and His real greatness.

We are to try now to see for ourselves that what Christ says in this wonderful saying of His is true. And we may begin by reminding ourselves of the falsity of the conception into which we so easily glide in thinking the material world to be more enduring than the spiritual. Christ's saying teaches us to recast our first impressions. That is a thing we are constantly under the necessity of doing. We are constantly being deceived by the outward appearances and shows of things, and have to learn the art—a great part of the wisdom of life just consists in learning the art—of getting behind appearances, and judging reality by other than material standards. When we do this we learn that mind is greater than matter, truth more enduring than the material order, thoughts and the words that embody them more permanent than even heaven and earth.

"Heaven and earth," Jesus says, "shall pass away." Now this, notwithstanding the apparent enduringness, is, as we know to-day, a simple and literal scientific fact. Stable as this great material universe seems to be, it is really in constant process of change. Only slowly and by prolonged and gradual steps has the universe been built up to what it is now. It had its beginning and it will have its end. Science makes perfectly clear to us that the existing conditions of things is not a permanent one; that the world, to use an illustration of its own, is in the position of a clock running down, and that it is as impossible for the present system of things to go on forever, without renewed supply of energy, as it would be for a clock to go on forever without renewed winding up. And there is nearly as little hesitation in science as there is in Scripture in saying in general terms what the end shall be. The end, in the view of men of science, may be postponed to an indefinitely distant period, but they no less than the believer in revelation most surely look forward and hasten unto the coming of a day—he may not call it a day of the Lord—when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. No truth is therefore more certain than this, testified long ago by the prophet Isaiah—"Lift up your eyes to the

heavens and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner"—tho the prophet is able gloriously to add—and it is but the Old Testament anticipation of this New Testament saying—"But my salvation shall be forever and my righteousness shall not be abolished."

Look now at words. It may be true that many words are mere breath and nothing else; true also that most books often are destined to a very brief term of existence. But this is not true of all words. There are words which the world reckons among its choicest treasures and which it will not willingly let die—words of wisdom so imperishable, of truth so rare, of thought so deep, of counsel so wise, that they can never pass away. The Bible is a book of very old words, and what freshness and vitality still belong to them. But even outside the Bible there are words in other literature, words great and wise and noble and beautiful, to which this same quality of permanence in their degree belongs. They are the words into which the race has distilled its choicest wisdom, and they are bound to live. And let us not undervalue the might of words. The thoughts they embody may be invisible; you may not be able to see or weigh or measure them, but the force which resides in them is, for all that, incalculable. Words have power

to kill and make alive. The ideas embodied in words are the forces which make and unmake societies. Masses of men are moved by the ideas which gain possession of their minds and these ideas are implanted in them and propagated through winged words. Mere physical force avails little in the end against the growth of ideas. It is ideas which govern the world. We come to see then, that it is not the material but the immaterial in which resides the greatest vitality and permanence. Heaven and earth shall pass away but it may very well be that there are some words which shall not pass away.

This quality of permanence we speak of belongs preeminently to the words of Christ. Jesus says it does and we are to try to see that what He says is true.

To show this, glance for a moment at what kind of words they are which do endure and what kind of words they are which do not endure. There are three kinds of words regarding which we may say with all confidence that they cannot endure. The first is false words. Falsehoods, indeed, have often a surprising vitality. They live long, are hard to kill, and in the interval do an infinite amount of mischief. Nay, so greedily do the minds of men sometimes receive error, so easily are they led away by sophistry and by appeals to their passions and prejudices, that we might be tempted to think that it is error, not truth, which rules

the world, and that the still, small voice of truth is scarcely heard in the noise and confusion of unwisdom and falsehood. But only a little thought is necessary to dispel this illusion. We cannot doubt that under the government of a God of truth the ultimate fate of everything false in this world is to be found out, exposed, condemned. An error, a superstition, may have a reign of centuries, but by and by, as thought widens and discovery advances, it is sure to be exploded. Every year sees the interment of some old-world fallacy, and if it also sees the springing up of some new fallacy of its own, future generations in like manner will see that buried.

A second class of words which cannot endure is trivial words. How few of the words spoken every day have even the remotest right to continued existence. They relate to the mere trifles or accidents of life: what so and so thought; how he felt; what he did; our passing impression about this and about that; the news of the day; where we were; what we saw; whom we met—so a stream of irresponsible talk flows on. Words of this kind are not meant to live—you can compare them to nothing more appropriately than to those swarms of gnats which circle round your heads in the sunlight on a warm summer evening, to which nature allots but a brief hour or day of existence.

The third class of words which cannot en-

dure are those which relate to subjects of but temporary importance. They need not be trivial words; the subjects to which they relate may be of the very highest interest and importance for the immediate present, but their interest is not a permanent one. There comes a day when they are things of the past and live only in history. Of what interest to us, e. g., except for historical purposes, are the questions of life and law and government affecting the Middle Ages? We have our own questions of political and social reform which are to us of great moment, but even these will become things of the past and will cease to interest our successors. Prophecies will fail, for they shall be fulfilled; tongues shall cease, for they shall no longer be spoken; knowledge shall pass away, for that to which our knowledge and ordered sciences relate shall have vanished from existence!

From these considerations we can gradually infer by contrast the character of the words which must and shall endure. They must be true words; they must be weighty words; and they must be words which refer to subjects of perpetual and eternal interest. Now what we say is that this is preeminently the character of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is upon the fact that His words are true, that they are weighty, and that they relate to subjects of infinite and everlasting moment, that He bases His assertion that heaven and

earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away. Can we refuse the claim?

Christ's words are true. He came forth from the bosom of the Father to proclaim the truth to a world which had in large measure lost the knowledge of the true God and of the way of life. He can say of His words what no other could say, "I am the truth." Approach Christ even from the human side and this quality in Him is apparent. The light of true knowledge of the Father shone in His soul and as it shone in no other. He had the clearest insight into the facts and laws of the spiritual world. Every chord of His nature vibrated in harmony with holiness and responded in delicate sympathy to impulses from above. What says even a skeptic of Christ (Greg): "In reading His words we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity; in studying His life we are following in the footsteps of the highest ideal yet presented to us on earth." Christ spake as never man spake; and in this way, by his words, as well as by all else about Him, He vindicated His claim to be not son of man alone, but Son of God Most High.

If Christ's words are true do they not also possess the other qualities of permanence? They are certainly weighty words. No light, trivial, shallow utterances are they. They em-

body deep enduring principles; set forth more than master truths; move in a region as high above the ordinary teachings of man as heaven is high above earth. When a man asked Jesus to bid his brother divide his inheritance with him, He said, "Man, who made me a judge and divider over you?" It was not Christ's mission to occupy Himself with these petty controversies. It is this which give His words weight. Each age, as it comes round, finds them fruitful in applications to itself. Christ commits Himself to no side in party politics; to no one denomination or party in the Church; to no one form of Church government or action; to no one mode of social organization; to no one solution of the questions of capital and labor, of rulers and subjects, of rich and poor. And the reason is that the solution of these questions proper to one age and stage of society, would not be the solution proper to another age and stage of society, and Christ is not the Teacher of one age only, else His words would, like those of other teachers, have long since become obsolete, but the Teacher of all times and of all ages. Hence He contents Himself with enunciating great truths, unfolding great principles which underlie and are to guide us in all our studies of these subjects and ought to regulate us in our thought and legislation upon them.

I was much struck in reading the

" Thoughts on Religion " by the late Mr. Romanes, that eminent scientific man who, during the greater part of his life, was under an absolute eclipse of his faith, who lost his faith even in God and wrote against belief in God, but who the last year or two of his life came back to the full Christian confession, and he tells us in these " Thoughts on Religion " that one thing that most profoundly influenced him was the discovery that Christ's words did not become obsolete as the words of other great teachers did; that while the words of Plato and others had passed away so far as actual living influence was concerned, the words of Jesus endured, and it was just this truth, that His words did not and do not pass away, that produced so remarkable an effect upon his mind.

But even this is not the most essential part of Christ's teaching. It is not the kingdom of earth but the kingdom of God concerning which He specially came to enlighten men, and it is to this higher and eternal region that most of His teachings belong. Here most of all we see the truth of the statement " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

What are the special themes to which Christ's words relate? He speaks to man above all of God His Father, and truth about God—if only it be truth—can in the nature of the case never pass away. Truth about other

things may pass away; but truth about eternal God, His being, character, love, grace—this can never pass so long as God Himself endures.

Christ speaks to us again about man, but about man under what aspect and in what relations? Not from the point of view of man in any of his natural characteristics, as rank, age, sex, race, culture; but solely of man as a spiritual and immortal being, in his capacity of enduring existence, in his relation to God and eternity. Christ speaks of that which is universal in man, therefore His teaching endures and applies to all grades of civilization and all stages of culture. In Christ Jesus there is neither Greek, or Jew, or Barbarian, or Scythian, or bond, or free, or male or female, or any of those things; but Christ regards man as a spiritual and immortal being; in his enduring aspect; in his relations to God and to eternity. Christ looked at man always and altogether in that one light, set man before Him in that light as He went through the world, taught about man in that light, legislated for man in that light, never looked at man in any other light than that. It might be the poorest beggar on the street; it might be the greatest sinner in the city; Christ always looked on that man or that woman in the light of their relation to God and to eternity, and therefore Christ's teaching about man endures. It cannot become obsolete;

it goes down deeper than all these distinctions that divide us. Oceans divide nations, interest divides nations, but Christ's teaching about man, about the soul, goes deeper than all these things. His teachings are fitted for every race—experience proves that—for every age, for every civilization. The little child begins to lisp " Our Father " and takes in these teachings of Jesus, and the sage in the heights of his loftiest speculations feels that he can never get beyond them, and so Christ's words about man endure.

Christ speaks again of spiritual truth and duty, of the righteousness of the kingdom of God, and this is truth which in its nature is eternal. There is no inherent necessity, so far as we can see, for the laws of the material universe, of the heaven and the earth, being precisely what they are. The planets, had the Creator willed it, might have revolved in other orbits, might have moved in different directions, the properties, laws and relations of substances might have been different from what they are. The fabric of the world is thus contingent on the Creator's decree, and so is alterable and can be thought of as passing away. But it is not so with spiritual and moral truth. That is eternal as the nature of God Himself. No decree of heaven could ever make that which is essentially right wrong or that which is essentially wrong right; could ever make falsehood, deceit or treachery into

virtues, or make love, affection, fidelity into vices. But it is in this region of eternal truth that throughout His gospel Christ specially legislates.

Finally, Christ speaks to man of salvation, and one of His favorite names for salvation is eternal life. It needs no proof that words of truth about eternal life are words that must and shall endure; that after all sums up the whole nature of Christ's mission to the world. He came to seek and to save the lost. He came that He might redeem and save us and bring us back to God, and what is Christ's own great name, or one of His great names for this salvation He came to bring? Is it not just this eternal life: "I give unto my sheep eternal life," he says. He came that we might have life, that we might have it more abundantly. In the very nature of the case truth about eternal life is truth that cannot pass away. Truth about earthly, temporal things may pass away; truth about eternal life cannot pass away. All that Christ came into this world to do had for its end the bestowing upon us of that life which is everlasting. His coming, His living, His dying, His rising again, the gift of His Spirit, everything else, all has this for its end, that we poor, perishing sinners may be lifted up into participation with that pure, holy, incorruptible, blessed life of God Himself, which is just the other name for eternal life; and

truth about this eternal life, as I say, is truth that can never pass away.

Thus we have turned these words of Jesus round and round. The more closely we look at them the more clearly we see that from their very nature they cannot pass away. They remain to us the touchstone of eternal truth, in all spiritual things, the rock foundation on which alone if men build they shall stand secure in that dread day, which shall try every man's work of what sort it is. May God grant that at long and last, when our persons and characters and life work are brought unto judgment, they may be found enduring because resting on this rock of the eternal words of Christ!

# PARSONS

## THE NEED OF A SPIRITUAL VISION

## RICHARD GODFREY PARSONS

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## THE NEED OF A SPIRITUAL VISION

The Rev. Richard G. Parsons, M.A.

*"He bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and he was transfigured before them."*—Matt. 17: 1, 2.

Who of us has not at some time longed in his heart for a vision to be vouchsafed to him, yearned that something might be shown to him, clear and indubitable, to prove to him once for all that verily and indeed there is a God; that without doubt within and beyond this strange world in which we are set, with all its puzzles and difficulties, its apparent perversities and contradictions, a supreme purpose is being worked out, a strong and living power by wisdom is reaching from one end of the world to the other, mightily and graciously ordering all things? If only the reality of this were once revealed to us in such a way that we could no longer hesitate to accept it as a fact, nay, more real than the dim world of which it would be the glorious explanation, how different everything would be? We feel we could go straightforward then, our path clear, a bright light shining around us; progress would be ours, for we should know something of the why and the wherefore of the world, and be able to guide our

lives accordingly, in spite of ignorance and opposition about us. "Oh! that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down to make thy name known to thy adversaries, that the nations might tremble at thy presence!" So cried the Hebrew prophet of old, and man has ever joined in spirit with his cry. And it is a glorious fact, that ever in proportion to the earnestness and sincerity of his prayer for a vision, a vision has been vouchsafed to him. If in the modern scientific study of religion age-long history has taught us nothing else, it has certainly taught us this, that from the earliest, feeblest gropings of man's spirit feeling after God, to his strongest and noblest achievements in the search for truth, right through, the words of Jesus Christ have been seen to be true, and His promise a promise warranted and justified by facts when He said, "Seek and ye shall find; ask and it shall be given you; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

For those that have sought have found; those that have asked have been given that for which they prayed; those that have knocked have had the portals of vision opened to them. No one thinks of doubting the truth of this fact in the external world of matter, in the realm of scientific discovery and invention. The progress made in our knowledge of these things during the past fifty years—nay, if you will, the achievements of the past week alone

—would be sufficient to silence such a doubt; but—and this we are slower to realize—in the inner world, that spiritual realm where men's souls live and think and aspire Godward, this law is equally valid. Here, too, if we seek we shall find. Men have sought in the past, and they have found; only whether it be in the outer or in the inner world, if you would be a discoverer, if you would see visions, you must seek. Seeking is not an acquiescence in ignorance, or a resting content with shallow, superficial opinions which we miscall mysteries. It is a passionate desire for knowledge, a longing of the very inmost soul for truth. Great discoveries in the world of nature come as the result of people being aware that there are great problems to be solved, latent forces to be set in motion. They come as a result of long and zealous labors to this end. And are we to believe that in the vaster universe of the spirit's life and being, where the mighty problems of life and death, of good and evil, of truth and error, are waiting to be made out, where the master forces of the thought and will and emotion are set in operation—are we to believe that in that sublime region where the divine and the human spirit meet together and hold mysterious converse, these discoveries will be made by the lazy, and that the indolent and the indifferent will be given revelations and visions of God? It is impossible; it cannot be. Light indeed does come into the

world, truth indeed is revealed, men do see visions, but only those who toil in their seeking, only those who hunger and thirst after God's kingdom and His righteousness, only those who wrestle and pray in the disquietness of their hearts, only to them are visions given, only they come to appear before the presence of God.

I believe there is not one of us here who has not at some time longed for the vision of God, for spiritual enlightenment, for a revelation to his soul. Is that longing still alive in us, urging us ever forward to greater effort in the search for what is true and what is real? Can we with sincerity say, "My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God? Oh! when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" Or has the sublime aspiration passed out of our hearts and left us without ideals, without enthusiasm for what is strong and beautiful and good?

How fatally easy it is for all of us to slip into a way of life in which our horizon becomes narrowly bounded, our range of sight and interest more and more contracted! How easy to let our perceptions become incapable of noting anything but the most obvious and the most trivial of the superficialities of everyday life, so that our reason loses its faculty for moving among those loftier realities from which alone our spirit can derive fresh light and strength! It is not necessary for our high-

est welfare that we should all become philosophers and metaphysicians; far from it; but it is necessary that we should all keep alive in us and develop the noblest and most distinctive faculty of our human nature, the faculty for spiritual life, the ability to hold conscious communion with the God in whom we live and move and have our being. Yet this faculty, like every other faculty of our complex nature, will fail and die if it be not exercised. If we would live as men should live and make progress to our divinely appointed goal, we must at all costs keep alive that power of ours by which we can pierce beyond the things of sense, the material and the transitory, and fix our gaze on the things unseen beyond, the realities of the spiritual world which are eternal. If this faculty of ours is left to die, if we allow ourselves to live entirely in the light of common day, then all hope for us of real progress is over, for then the very conditions of human progress as such are destroyed. The old proverb is true which says, "Where there is no vision the people perish."

Can it be said for us to-day that there is no vision, that the people are perishing for lack of it? Look out on modern life, with its daily multiplying complexities. Surely if ever there was a time when each one of us needed some great constraining ideal to govern our conduct it is now! Have we got one? Surely, if ever the people as a whole should be crying

out for a guiding flash of light from the beacon of eternal truth it is now! Has society as a whole, has the nation, a heavenly vision to which to be obedient? There is little time for rest nowadays, for leisure and quiet thought, and even when that time comes the iron grip of our work-a-day life seems not to relax. It has seized on the very fibers of our minds and forced and cramped them into its own restricted molds, so that outside of them our thought moves but feebly and soon grows tired; if noble works of literature, and above all the Bible, are less consistently and less sympathetically read than they used to be, the fault is not in them, but in the people who do not read them, or rather in the character of the civilization and the conditions of life that have made them well-nigh incapable of sustained and serious interests. Look at the advertisements on our boardings, look at the scrappy superficialities of the popular press. Think of the names of the books which are most read in our public libraries. Think of the kind of play which is financially the most successful in our theaters. How shallow, how superficial is all the stuff which alone seems capable of attracting men's attention nowadays! How quickly we tire and turn away from anything that might lead us to think of something beyond this vanity of vanities! Not only of the vast crowds of those who never enter a place of worship is this true. Those

of us who come to church, who profess more or less seriously to identify ourselves with the cause of religion, are we escaping unspotted from this plague of superficiality? Our impatience of theologies, our dislike of dogmas, our clamoring for shorter sermons and still shorter prayers—how much of it is due to a really earnest searching after truth, to a real advance in appreciative power for the deeper things of life?

Let us be honest with ourselves. Do we still keep a time every day for quiet thought, for serious reading, for careful meditation and prayer? Are we still conscious of possessing a constant power in our souls that is strong enough to pierce through the husk of outward happenings to the inward heart of things? Has nature for us still its old glamorous charm, can it still waken in us the sense of a world of order and beauty that abides unmoved through all the ravages of change and decay? Or is it true that in spite of our improved education, our cheaper luxuries, our many inventions, we are most of us less highly endowed with the faculty of spiritual insight than was many a simpler soul in a simpler civilization? Nay, because of the progress in the material side of our civilization and the restlessness it brings into our lives, it becomes even harder for us to find the time and the strength and the concentration to turn from the things that are passing away and to cleave

to the things that abide. We have not the time to see visions, and consequently the desire to see them is dying out of our hearts.

Walking through barren signs we feast, it is true, our eyes,
But little the soul divines what lurks under form's disguise;
To us the earth is a book whose writings we cannot read;
Although in the page we look, our eyes still mock at our need.

Where there is no vision the people perish. We need all of us, each one of us, a vision, or we die. Our text brings before us the story of the greatest vision ever given to the mind and heart of man, the vision of Jesus Christ's transfiguration. Are we content to leave that vision aside as something that happened long ago on a distant mountain to some men who have been for centuries in their graves? Have we ever yet tried to make our own, a real and living experience in our lives, the vision of Jesus Christ transfigured? What is Jesus Christ to us? Is He only a figure of the far distant past, a person of whom we are content to know that He lived in an eastern land some nineteen hundred years ago, that He taught the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of men, that He came into collision with the religious and political authorities of His time and was put to death, but that His followers declared that they had known Him alive after

His death, and persuaded others to believe Him to have risen and to be indeed divine, the Son of God—a belief which is still profest by those who are after Him called Christians?

That is about as much as many to-day know, or care to know, about Jesus Christ, many who have had an education and are very up-to-date. If that is all our knowledge of Him amounts to it will not help us very much. Such an answer to the question we all have to answer, "What think ye of Christ?" is about as trivial and as superficial as it well could be. The discovery of who and what He really is will not come to us if we are content with such information as that. No; it requires time and patient thought and careful testing, it requires enthusiasm to get to the heart of the truth about Him. We must begin the toilsome climbing up the mountain side whither He leads us as He led the disciples of old, up out of the trivialities of our little self-centered lives, beyond the insufficient and misleading view of things which we get while we remain on the flat, narrow-bounded plain of our daily tasks and momentary amusements. All the life down there we must leave behind, we must lose it—that life which so many of us feel to be our only life. His words are plain: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." For His sake! We must lose our old self-centered lives in our zeal for that life in Him,

which is higher and greater and better; by practical experiment and careful thought puzzle out the secret of His hard sayings, pushing up along the steep and narrow way with Him, till at last light breaks through the darkness and He is transfigured before us, and we see Him whom we have been following, no longer merely the Prophet of Nazareth, the Teacher of long ago, the object of other men's worship, but clearly revealed to our own spirit's gaze in a radiance that is not of this world—the familiar story of His life illuminated with a new and dazzling light that shows us that He who told us to take up the cross and follow Him, to lose our lives for His sake if we would find them was no mere utterer of precepts, no mere proclaimer of doctrines, but Himself through life and death, verily and indeed the true embodiment, the one and only incarnation for us men and for our salvation of that eternal life and love—that what He is God Himself is.

If once we have seen this then we have had a vision that can never wholly fade away, a vision that will lighten all our lives. Jesus, our Lord and our God, will have given us something of that power of His by which He makes all things new. His own gift of vision will be ours, and in His light shall we see light, and our souls will live and grow and thrive in it. We shall see more and more the world as He saw it, and the splendid promise in all creation. We shall come to see ourselves and our

fellow men as He sees us—beings who, in spite of sin and weakness and ignorance, have nevertheless that in them which can be developed and come to the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

And this most heartening vision of the transfiguration of man in the light of the transfiguration of Christ, so far from making us unpractical, restless people, will enable us to become, like our Master, enthusiasts for humanity, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling His law and taking up with Him the cross on which humanity is lifted up to God. We need a vision, a vision that shall transfigure for us the world, and make it bright with the light of heaven. The only vision which can do that is the vision of Jesus Christ, the certainty that within Him dwells all the power and love of God. But that vision is not granted to us all at once. We must wonder and question and think and pray, as His first disciples did. We must go apart with Jesus, up, as it were, into a mountain, where we may forget for awhile the turmoil of our daily life in quietness and solitude. Among the beauties of hill and wood and sea and field withdraw apart awhile. Look into your own soul and see its darkness, and you will cry for light. Look at Jesus Christ as the gospel story brings Him before you, enter into communion with Him in prayer and sacrament, ponder over His way of life, try and

follow it yourself in the quiet days while you have time to think before you act. Persevere and be sure if you seek you will find. Our Lord will reveal Himself to you in His great beauty. You will see Him, the divine life of your life, the soul of your soul, the Christ in you the hope of glory. And having seen the radiance on the mount of vision, when you have to return to the plain again, and the crowds, and the toil below, and work begins once more, you will carry with you that which none can take from you, the gift, Christ's gift, of vision. And lifting up your eyes you will see still close to you, and more to you than ever He was before, Jesus, Jesus only. And seeing Him, you will arise and not be afraid.

PATON

THE GREATEST QUESTION

## LEWIS BAYLES PATON

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## THE GREATEST QUESTION

PROF. LEWIS B. PATON, PH.D., D.D.

*"Who say ye that I am?"*—Matt. 16 : 15.

CHRIST'S question, "Who say ye that I am?" is so familiar that we do not always realize its extraordinary character. Why should He ask His disciples who He was? Was not that perfectly apparent to everybody? So thought the Jews in His day, when they said, "We know this man whence he is" (John 7 : 27). "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? (Matt. 13 : 55 f.). Other religious teachers and leaders have not felt constrained to ask this question of their disciples. In spite of their genius and the dignity that their message conferred upon them, they have understood that they differed so little from the rest of mankind that it would be absurd for them to ask, Who say ye that I am? But Jesus was conscious of a mysterious something about Himself that differentiated Him from all other men, and that made it imperative for Him to put this question; and so, from beginning to end of His ministry, we find Him directing the attention of His dis-

ciples not so much to His doctrine as to His person. He does not say, " Come to my way of thinking," but, " Come unto me "; not, " Follow my rule of life," but, " Follow thou me "; not, " What say ye of my doctrine? " but, " Who say ye that I am? "

No less extraordinary than the question of Jesus is the way in which men everywhere have felt compelled to answer this question. If other men should put this question to us, we should pay no attention to it. We are under no compulsion to define the other great teachers and leaders of humanity, and to come to a decision in regard to their claims; but there has always been a strange power about this question of Jesus. Men cannot escape it, they cannot ignore it. Those to whom it first came were obliged to give it an answer of some sort, and throughout the succeeding centuries, wherever the story of the gospel has been told, men have been constrained to say to themselves, Who is this Jesus of Nazareth, what is He, and what is His claim upon me?

The gospel narrative shows us four answers to Jesus' question that were given by the men of His own day. They are representative of the answers that men have been giving ever since.

First, there was the answer of the scribes and the Pharisees. They were the religious leaders of the nation, the makers of public opinion. They had long been considering this

question of Jesus, and their minds were fully made up as to the answer that they should give to it. They said, He is an impostor, " He deceiveth the people." They were sure that they were correct in their ideas about religion, and when they learned that He differed from them, they at once pronounced Him a heretic. They laid emphasis upon the ritual commandments of the law, but Jesus emphasized the message of the prophets, " I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the love of God rather than burnt offerings "; and He denounced the scribes and the Pharisees as hypocrites, who bound heavy burdens around the necks of other men, but who would not touch them with one of their fingers. This was enough to convince them that He was a dangerous character, who ought to be put out of the way lest He should pervert the minds of the people. When their attention was called to His healings of those diseased in mind or in body, they said, " He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils " (Matt. 12 : 24).

This answer of the religious authorities of Jesus' day to His question concerning Himself has been the answer of official Judaism ever since. The Talmud, that huge repository of Jewish thought during the first six centuries of our era, has only scorn for Jesus as an arch-heretic who caused a great apostasy from the religion of Moses. Down to our own day the common Jewish name for Him has

been the contemptuous title "he who was hung," which expresses the thought that He suffered justly as a deceiver of mankind. In modern times, however, Judaism has come for the most part to take a higher view of Him and, outside of Judaism, the view that He was an impostor has been exceedingly rare. Two centuries ago, at the time of the French "illumination," there were some who regarded all religious teachers as impostors, Jesus along with the rest; and who were ready to say of Him with Voltaire, "Crush the wretch." There may be some to-day who hold this view; but if there are such, they exert little influence in the world of thought.

Second, there was the answer of a few of the Jewish leaders. Men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were not willing to pronounce Jesus an impostor, but regarded Him rather as a great religious teacher. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, he said to him, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." That is to say, he regarded Him as an expounder of the law like himself, and was willing to admit that He possest both genius and truth in His views concerning religion and ethics.

This has been the attitude of the heathen world in general. The Greeks and the Romans would have been quite willing to admit Jesus to a place among their own wise men, philosophers, and poets, and to have adopted many

of His teachings, if the early Church had made no higher claim for Him than that He was a teacher, like the world's other great teachers. The people of India, China, and Japan are willing to-day to accept Jesus on the same basis. They will put Him alongside of Buddha and Confucius, but they will not accord Him a higher place. This is the attitude also of modern liberal Judaism. It regards Jesus as a great and a good man, one of the rabbis, like Hillel or Gamaliel, who taught men how to keep the law of Moses, and who did not differ essentially from other teachers of Judaism. This is also the common opinion of most men who to-day stand outside of the Christian Church. They have no doubt of Jesus' purity or of His sincerity. They think that He uttered many noble ethical maxims which are worthy of obedience, but they can see no essential difference between Him and Socrates, or Plato, or Mohammed, or Dante, or Shakespeare.

Third, there was the answer of the mass of the common people in the time of Christ. When Jesus said to Peter, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" Peter replied, "Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." The Book of Malachi had predicted that Elijah should return, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers; and many of the peo-

ple thought that this prediction was fulfilled in Jesus. Others noticed that He came with the same message as John the Baptist, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and they concluded that John had come to life again. Others thought that He most resembled Jeremiah, and still others did not try to identify Him with a particular character of the Old Testament, but said simply, He is one of the prophets; that is, they recognized in Him a divine inspiration that lifted Him above all ordinary teachers, but they could not see that He differed in any essential way from Moses, or Elijah, or Isaiah, or any of the other prophets of the Old Covenant.

This view concerning Jesus has been widely prevalent at different times in the Christian Church. It is the view of our Unitarian brethren, and of large numbers in other denominations. They see that Jesus is more than an ordinary sage, that a special divine illumination must be recognized in Him, but they can see no fundamental distinction between Him and other prophets whom from time to time God has raised up to bring a message to men.

Fourth, there was the answer of Peter and the other apostles. When, after asking, "Who say men that I am?" Jesus continued, "But who say ye that I am?" Peter as the spokesman of the Twelve replied,

" Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." That is to say, he recognized in Jesus the fulfilment of all the Old Testament predictions concerning the coming of a glorious personage, endued with the sevenfold spirit of God, who should appear in the name and in the majesty of God to overcome the enemies of Israel, to destroy sin, and to establish the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and truth for evermore upon earth; and more than this, he recognized in Him such a unique relation to God, that it was possible to speak of Him as " the Son of the living God " in a sense in which it was possible to speak of no other man.

This was the view of the early Church when it went forth to conquer the world for Jesus. It was the view of Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, and it has been the view of the great multitude of Christians in all ages since.

These, then, were the answers that men gave to Jesus' question, " Who say ye that I am? " at the time when that question was first put; and they are the answers that men have been giving ever since. The fact that there are so many different replies cannot fail to perplex the thoughtful mind. If even the men of Christ's own day could not agree in regard to Him, and if ever since men have not been able to agree, how can we hope in these latter days to answer this question with certainty for ourselves? The problem is formid-

able, but much light is shed upon it when we consider who the people were that gave these different answers to Christ's question, and observe that those who gave the lowest definition were those who knew least about Him, and that those who gave the highest definition were those who knew most about Him. Let us look at each of the answers from this point of view.

Those who pronounced Jesus an impostor were the scribes and the Pharisees who knew little or nothing about Him except that He did not agree with their views. They would have scorned to have stood with the common crowd in the market-place, or on the sea-shore, and to have listened to His words. That would have been as strange as for an archbishop to sit at the feet of a street preacher of the Salvation Army. They would not follow Jesus about from town to town to hear all that He had to say and to see all His wonderful works. It was enough for them to know that He did not agree with them for them to condemn Him; they did not find it necessary to look more closely into His doctrine. They had their paid spies out watching Him, and they sent some of their number from time to time to propound questions through which they hoped He would be entrapped into saying something that could be construed as blasphemy or treason; but, beyond the garbled stories that these emissaries brought back,

they had no knowledge of Him. These blind, prejudiced men, who had no first-hand knowledge of Jesus, and whose sole effort was to destroy Him, were the only ones who pronounced Him an impostor. Their opinion is of little importance in the matter.

Those who pronounced Jesus a great teacher were the men who knew a little more about Him. They felt that it was unfair to condemn anyone without a hearing, and they resolved to investigate the young teacher of Galilee on their own behalf. Men like Nicodemus came to Him by night to learn more about His doctrine; and as they listened to Him, and saw the nobility of His thought and the sincerity of His purpose, they became convinced that, whatever else He was, He was not an impostor. No man could teach as He taught unless He were good and true. Accordingly, with their more perfect knowledge, they felt compelled to give up the theory of their associates that Jesus was a deceiver, and to advance the theory that He was a pious rabbi sent by God to help men understand and keep the law.

Those who pronounced Jesus a prophet were the multitude that accompanied Him from town to town. They had heard all of His sermons, they had seen all of His mighty deeds, they knew Him far more completely than the timid rabbis who came to Him only occasionally by night. They knew Him better

than any others, except the inner circle of the Twelve; and, in the light of that fuller knowledge, they saw that they could not stop short with the theory that He was only a great teacher. No man could speak as He spoke, no man could do the miracles of healing that He did, unless God were with Him in a peculiar way. They saw that He spoke with authority, and not as the scribes; that they could not classify Him among the rabbis whose business it was to expound an already given law, but that they must at least recognize Him as standing on an equality with the prophets of the Old Covenant as one enlightened in peculiar measure by the Spirit of God.

Those who pronounced Jesus the Messiah, the Son of the living God, were the Twelve, who knew Jesus with an intimacy that is without a parallel in the history of human relationships. They were His constant companions throughout the whole of His ministry. Together they trudged with Him over the dusty roads of Syria, beneath the blazing light of an unclouded sun. Together they watched with Him on the lonely mountainside in the cold Syrian nights. They saw Him in the hour of triumph and in the hour of apparent defeat. They saw Him at the wedding-feast and by the bedside of the dying, in joy and in sorrow, in strength and in weakness, in health and in sickness, by day and by night. Every phase of His thought and character was famil-

iar to them, and through all, the wonderful impression was made upon them that He was a sinless man. One of them speaking of Him said, " He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners "; and another said, " He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Other men may have been saints to the world at large, but never to their intimate associates. The members of their families, their close companions, their servants, have been only too well aware of their shortcomings. But these associates of Jesus, who had the opportunity to watch Him so closely, could find no flaw in Him.

We cannot say that they esteemed Him thus highly because their standards of judgment were low. They were Jews, who had been trained in the righteousness of the law and of the prophets, and that was no low sort of righteousness. Besides, they had been under the tuition of Jesus Himself, and no one ever set the standard of conduct so high as He. He taught that righteousness consisted in the inner state of the heart, rather than in the outer act, and He said to His disciples, " Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no wise see the kingdom of God." Judged by His own lofty standard they found Him faultless.

Nor can we say that the standard of the age in which the first disciples lived was a low one,

and that, judged by the higher standards of our own day, Jesus does not stand the test. This is true of many other teachers of the Church. Luther, in spite of all his glorious service, was a rough, violent man, for many of whose acts his followers need to apologize. Calvin, in spite of all the good that he did, burnt Servetus at the stake; and many a loyal Calvinist of to-day would give his right hand if he could blot that deed from the page of history. But in the life of Jesus there is nothing for which His followers need to apologize. The ages have come and have gone, mankind has progressed wonderfully in the arts and the sciences, but no higher moral ideal has been attained than that exprest in His life. Far from being left behind by the advance of civilization, He still remains the unattained ethical ideal toward which the world is struggling. The verdict of the first disciples has been the verdict of each succeeding age. As we study closely the story of His life recorded in the gospels, we are constrained to acknowledge with those who knew Him so intimately that He was a sinless man.

Recognizing the sinlessness of Jesus, the Twelve were forced to give some explanation of this fact, and they saw clearly that all the other theories that were held in their day were inadequate to explain the personality of their Master. A sinless man could not be an impostor. A sinless man was more than a great

teacher, more even than a prophet of the Old Testament, for the prophets were men of like passions with ourselves. The unblemished purity of Jesus they could explain only by recognizing that He stood in a relation to God different from that held by any other man, that God was manifest in Him in a unique way, that He was one with the Father in a unique sense; and, therefore, when Jesus solemnly put the question to them, "Who say ye that I am?" the only answer that they could give was, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Intimate as was the relation of the Twelve to Jesus, there was one who knew Him even better than they, and that one was Jesus Himself. Long before the mystery of His sinlessness had dawned upon them it had dawned upon Him, and had prest for an interpretation. From earliest childhood He had been conscious of an unbroken fellowship with God, which enabled Him to look up and say, "My Father," in a way that none of us can say, who bear in our consciences the burden of sin. At His baptism in Jordan He had heard a voice saying, "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In the wilderness He was subjected to the three chief temptations to which men fall a prey, and was victorious. Throughout His life He never once knew an interruption of perfect communion with His Father, and He was able to pray,

"Father I know that thou hearest me always." Many of Jesus' prayers are recorded for us in the gospels, but in no one of them do we find the note of contrition that is so fundamental in the prayers of all other holy men. Judged by His own lofty standard of character, He could find no sin to confess. Other religious leaders have prayed often with their disciples, and have taught them by example how they ought to pray, but there is no record that Jesus ever prayed with His disciples. He could not do so, because He could not join in the cry of penitence that must be the first word of the petition of other men. To His disciples He said, "After this manner pray ye, Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," but He never joined in that prayer, for He knew that He had no sin to confess. Even at the end of His life, when the shadows were closing in about Him, and He knew that the cross stood immediately before—even then we see no sign of contrition. In the presence of death, if never before, other men are constrained to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner"; but, instead of that, we find Jesus praying, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17 : 4).

It was this consciousness of sinlessness that forced home upon Jesus the same question

that He put to His disciples, " Who say ye that I am? " and, long before they had been able to give an answer to that question, He had answered it for Himself. He knew that His sinlessness and unbroken fellowship with God could have no explanation except that, in a unique way, true of no other man, He was one with the Father. Long before the confession of Peter He had said to Himself, " Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." But He did not force this conviction upon His disciples. Faith that rested merely upon His authority would have little value. He wished rather to have His followers reach this conclusion for themselves on the basis of their own observation; then their faith would be a possession that could not be taken from them. Accordingly, He waited until the very end of His ministry before He called upon them to decide who He was. After they had heard all His gracious words, after they had seen all His miracles, after they had come to know Him under every circumstance of life, then, when all the evidence that He had to offer was in, He turned solemnly to them and said, " Who say ye that I am? " and when Peter as the spokesman of the Twelve replied, " Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God," that answer came as no surprise to Jesus. We do not find Him putting it away from Him as a temptation, and saying to Peter, " No Peter, you must not speak of me

in that way." Nor do we find Him dallying with the thought, as something in regard to which He Himself was in perplexity, and saying to Peter, "Do you really think that I am so great a personage as that?" Instead of this, we find only the prompt and glad acceptance of the confession, as of something that He had long hoped to hear, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. . . . Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

PEABODY

THE OPENING DOORS

## FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY

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## THE OPENING DOORS

PROF. FRANCIS G. PEABODY, D.D., LL.D.

*"I am the door."*—John 10 : 7.

THERE are two kinds of religion, which make their appeal to opposite sides of human life. The two religions have the same source, but they move in opposite directions, like two streams which have their springs on the same mountain but flow down different slopes to different seas. One kind of religion thinks of life as at rest; the other kind thinks of life as in motion. One is the answer to the prayer for peace; the other is the answer to the prayer for power. One is the religion of repose; the other is the religion of action. One is the religion of age; the other of youth. According to one, Jesus says: "Come unto me all ye that labor, and I will give you rest"; according to the other, He says: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow." According to one, the great word of the New Testament is the saying: "I am the truth"; according to the other, the most persuasive message of Jesus is the saying: "I am the door." Both of these ways of religion are real. What many a tired life desires is rest after pain, relief from care, a place of safety from the troub-

les of the world; and to such a life the peaceful security of a Christian faith opens like a quiet harbor of refuge after anxious days of tossing storm. But there are many lives which do not crave this sense of security. On the contrary, the desire to retreat from life, the anxious search for a harbor, is precisely what makes religion seem to many healthy, happy lives uninteresting and remote—appropriate for the weak, the discouraged, or the dying, but not for the young, the strong, and the brave. What their lives want is not rest, but motion; not idleness, but usefulness; not a harbor of refuge, but the large adventures of the open sea. You watch a battered wreck as it is towed into the harbor, and you say, "Take her to some safe dock, and moor her where no storm can come, for she is too weather-beaten to leave port;" but when you see a well-built vessel standing out into the bay you say, "There goes a craft which can laugh at storms; her mission is not to rest, but to move; her captain asks, not a dock to lie in, but a course to steer and a port to reach some day." It is a picture of the undiscouraged, expectant, normal human life, not yet resigned to the religion of age, but asking further guidance into the unexplored, the unrevealed, the perilous yet beckoning unknown. To such a life comes this promise, more than once repeated, and issuing from the last hours of the life of Jesus: "I am the door.

Through me men enter into their larger life. I am the way. I give the course to steer. I open the gate of opportunity. My gospel is not one of peace alone, but one of progress and power." This is the aspect of the teaching of Jesus to which we turn to-day. It is not the whole gospel. It is not the message of religion to the tired, the aged, the sinners, or the mourners: but it is the answer to the wholesome, natural desire of many an eager, questioning, restless, unsatisfied, hesitating, self-distrustful, youthful life.

"I am the door!" It is curious to see how often the progress of life through the successive incidents of experience is like the passing from one room to another of some ample house through a succession of opening doors. You enter one room and the door closes behind you, and there seems no way out; but while you seem thus shut in, another door unexpectedly opens before you, and you go on into a larger room beyond. This, for instance, is the story of each step in education. A child is shut in among the first principles of his task, and it seems to him a narrow, restricted, penal experience, from which he longs to be set free. What are these tiresome rules of grammar, he asks, these exercises of composition, these preposterous problems of rooms to paper and cord-wood to measure, but parts of a prison discipline ingeniously devised to repress the spirits of a healthy boy? Is it not

all, as one child said of learning the alphabet, going through a great deal to get very little? Then, in some happy hour, under the touch of some real teacher, or through the inspiration of some book or thought or friend, these abstractions of education become transformed into realities. A door opens from this unmeaning discipline into significance, mastery, progress; and the child looks through that door into the larger room of usefulness, accuracy, science, insight, joy, to which the antechamber of these unwelcome tasks is now seen to be the only way.

The same story may be told of the higher education. A youth passes from the compulsion of the schoolroom to the liberty of the university, and there confronts him the problem of the choice of studies. The vast diversity of the elective system lies before him with its confusing abundance, and he is bewildered by the sudden expansion of his intellectual life. When, however, he considers more seriously the problem of choice, this sense of liberty is changed into a new sense of limitation. What is this increase of freedom but a new form of compulsion? Liberty to choose many subjects means necessity to choose a few. Here and there in the world of scholarship are regions which he may enter, but there remains many an alluring field of study which he cannot hope to explore. Many a door must be left unopened, and many an-

other passed barely beyond the threshold, if he would advance with any confidence into his special pursuit. What a shut-in experience, then, the liberty of the modern scholar comes to be! What has become of that earlier tradition of a symmetrical culture which marked the gentleman of two generations ago—the education which could embellish talk with quotations from the classics, which knew something of many things instead of everything of something of which no one else knew even the name? How narrow seems the field —say rather, the rut—of the modern student; and with what a sigh he abandons the earlier ideal of a comprehensive culture under the compulsion of a specialized world!

What is it, then, which can restore self-respect to modern scholarship? It is the discovery that this world of spacious learning, this sense of amplitude and liberty, which seems at first shut out by the specialization of studies, is to be reached in no other way than through the narrow entrance of specialized work. The door, indeed, shuts behind one, as he turns to his chosen task, and shuts out many delightful undertakings which he abandons with regret. Concentration of attention becomes the stern law of success; but of a sudden, out of the narrow room which he has entered, at some unanticipated point, like a secret passage in a solid rock, another door opens, out of limitation into enlargement, out

of facts into principles, and the student discovers that the task which seemed restrictive is in fact the essential preliminary of insight, wisdom, and power. First the narrow passage of specialized mastery, then the opening door into the general law, the glimpse of the larger truth, the step into mastery—that is the way which the modern scholar has to go.

The same experience meets one in more dramatic fashion as he goes his further way into the world. A young man leaves college and looks about him in life for a work which is worth his doing and which he is fit to do, and the first impression which confronts him is of limitation and restriction; the doubt whether there be any room left for such as he, the lack of any outlook toward a large, full, human kind of life. It is not that he demands much of the world. All he asks is what he calls an "opening." "Give me but a chance," he says, "and I will take my chances." But the world's work shuts him in between the walls of some confining task, and with a sense of hopelessness he surrenders himself to its inevitable routine and detail, as tho the one thing he could not have was the "opening" he desires. He will not shirk even repressive obligations; he will try to believe in the dignity of labor, even when that labor is mechanical, insignificant, and dull; but at the end of the day it is as tho the silent figure of Life stood with its back against the door which

leads to larger service, holding him off as he would force it open; and he cries out, "Is this shut-in space all the room I am to have, and this meager opportunity the end to which my conscientious service leads? Oh, Life, that seems to mock me with thy silence, give me my chance! Open the close-shut door!"

Then, one day, in a manner altogether unanticipated and incalculable, this man's chance arrives. The door opens, sometimes in quite another place from that which seems the opening he desires—not where the door seemed to be, but where the wall seemed blank and impenetrable; and the young man is called into the larger room, of which his restricted duty was the essential vestibule, and his fidelity to that duty the only key. You do the shut-in task and it opens into the larger opportunity; you face the limited duty and the larger duty discloses itself just beyond. The door beyond opens only as the door behind is shut. Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life. To him that is faithful in that which is least, that which is much is revealed! That is what makes life so rich, so surprising, so romantic—that the little that is known is the gate of the greater unknown, and the little that one does makes it possible to do more. Sometimes these antechambers of experience are mysterious and dark; and duty, sacrifice, sickness, close round one's chances of enlargement like prison-cells which shut in

nearer and nearer as tho they were to crush one to death. But this is the miracle of many a shut-in experience—that in the black, hard wall as it approaches, there appears, first, a tiny beam of light, then a view beyond it to peace and hope, and then at last an open door, through which one sees as never before the meaning of life and passes into a use of life to which nothing but that dark approach could have disclosed the way.

Such is the story of multitudes of lives—the surprising and miraculous story of life's opening doors. But now, suppose one sums up all these scattered incidents of experience, and thinks of the whole of life as thus consciously led from room to room, to richer gifts of opportunity and liberty, of duty and of beauty, what is this way of life which opens thus from door to door? Why, this is nothing else than religion; or more accurately, this is the first gift of the religion of Jesus Christ to the life of a young man in the modern world. It is often fancied that the religious life is a narrowing, restrictive, disciplinary experience. You give up things; you deny yourself; you are shut in by pledges, by creeds, by priests; and then you are a Christian. Renunciation, "*Entsagen,*" as Carlyle said, becomes the great word of faith. The religious life, under such a definition, is not a thing in motion, but at rest; not a form of progress, but a way of peace. No greater mistake can

be made about religion than to reduce it to this negative, ascetic, monastic state of mind. Submission, self-denial, resignation, are indeed asked of every man some day; but the first appeal of the religion of Jesus Christ to normal and healthy youth is to the sense of power, initiative, action, and desire. It asks, first of all, not denial but affirmation; not renunciation but acceptance; not a retreat but an advance. "I am come," says Jesus, "that they may have life and may have it abundantly." "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." It is not a soft and easy world which is thus offered, with no burdens to be borne. "Take up thy cross," says Jesus, "and follow!" But even this is a demand, not for resignation—as tho one lay limp and helpless before the cross of Christ—but for strength to take up one's cross like a man and follow, even tho stumblingly, where the way of the cross must go. The purpose of Jesus Christ is not to efface personality, but to discover personality; not to save people out of the world, but to make people fit to save the world. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "All things are yours." "I am the way." These are the great commands which reverberate through the New Testament—words of growth, enlargement, progress, power. Other aspects of the teaching of Jesus make their appeal to other moods, as one enters deeper among the experiences of

life; but the first word that meets the shut-in, hesitating, self-distrustful life is the summons of Jesus that bids him to go forward: "I am the door."

And how is it, one goes on to ask, that religion thus opens the doors of life? It does so, we must answer, in two ways: first by giving a new meaning to the world, and then by giving a new meaning to one's own life. It opens the door, that is to say, first into a larger universe, and then into a deeper self. On the one hand are the great number of thoughtful people who are bewildered by the mystery of an uninterpreted world. Here is this ceaseless whirl of material forces in which we are involved; this tragic struggle for physical existence, these brutal competitions of the industrial world, this brief, vain incident of personal life, with its little joys and sorrows, its ambitions and dreams, lifting themselves like a bright wave upon the ocean and in a moment sinking back into the depth; and the cry comes from many a heart: What does all this mean? Has it any meaning? Is it, as some learned people tell us, a hollow, empty, delusive world, a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing? Is it but a sport of the Eternal, where we are

"Impotent pieces of the game he plays,
Upon this checker-board of nights and days.
Hither and thither moves and checks and slays,
And one by one back in the cupboard lays?"

What is it that gives meaning to the world and sets one in a rational universe of unity and purpose instead of chaos and despair? It is the view which opens through the door of religion. Much there may be in the order of the universe which still remains baffling and mysterious, much postponement of knowledge in God's education of the human race. But what a step is taken toward sanity and self-control and peace of mind, when one looks upon the world as the scene of a spiritual intention and desire which give to its perplexing incidents their unity and worth! It is as tho the high stone wall which bounds the physical world opened into a gateway and one looked through to a path of sunlight and flowers. It may be one's part to stay and work and suffer between the walls of life, but it is easier to work and possible to bear, if one can hold the gate a little open, and keep the vista clear from the shadow to the sunshine, from the tasks of life to the vision of God.

And if this is true of one's view of the world, it is much more true of one's knowledge of himself. For one person that has come to doubt the meaning of the universe a hundred have come to doubt the meaning of their own lives. How meager, how superficial, how purposeless, is the petty experience within which one seems inevitably bound! How insignificant is its scope, how unimportant its consequences! Why strive and agon-

ize, why hope and scheme, as tho one were accomplishing and progressing and arriving, when in fact one is but the horse that turns the treadmill, whipt to his task in the machine, but tied all day in the little pen that never moves. It is this sense of insignificance and impotency which robs a man of his faith and hope. It is sometimes said that young men in our day think too much of themselves; and it would certainly be an exaggeration to affirm that the typical modern youth deserves the beatitude pronounced upon the poor in spirit. Yet the chief moral danger of such young lives does not lie, as many persons think, in their self-conceit, but in their self-distrust; not in thinking too much of themselves, but in thinking too little of themselves. What they need is not so much "taking down," as lifting up; not so much a new self-reproach, as a new self-respect. To think too much of oneself may be a form of intoxication, but to think too little of oneself is a form of paralysis. To live in a shut-in universe is a philosophical misfortune; but to live in a shut-in soul is a moral tragedy.

And what is it which lets one out from this sense of limitation and defeat? It is the sense of association with the purposes of God, the recognition of one's life as a part of the divine plan, the response of the child to the call of the Father. You are not alone, because the Father is with you; you

are not helpless, because beneath you are the everlasting arms; you are not a failure, because you are a laborer together with God; and an unexpected sense of capacity and effectiveness is kindled as you commit yourself to a service which is not your own. You come to yourself and say: "I will go to my Father." That is the best gift of religion—the gift to the individual soul of faith in itself. And what is this but the opening of a door—not outward into the larger world, but inward into the deeper self—so that one passes into an interior life of tranquillity, serenity, and praise. The religious life is like those Egyptian temples, which in their outer courts looked through great free vistas to the fertile fields and the deep blue sky; but as the worshiper sought the central shrine, door after door swung open into interior rooms, until at last in a hush of solitude which no sound could penetrate and no fellow-worshiper could share, the single life bowed in the central sanctuary where it found its God.

Such then is the first message of religion to an eager, forward-looking, undiscouraged, modern life—the message of expansion, liberty, spaciousness, horizon, hope. Sometimes a man asks what religion can do for him in so busy and real a world. It does not answer all our problems, or free us from our cares, or abolish our sorrows, or insure us against risk. Of what use, then, is religion, if it is not

authoritative, conclusive, remedial—a rest for the saints? To such questions concerning the meaning of life Jesus, on the last day of His life, answers: "I am the door." The normal, healthy, expectant life hears the summons to go forward and welcomes the guide who opens the door. What is it to live, but to pass from room to room of the great house of experience and to find each successive room more ample and satisfying? What can one ask of life, but just a chance to enter the larger world and to know the hidden self? What is the great mistake of life? It is to pause in the antechambers of experience and never know how spacious life may be. And when, from room to room, one's life has been led on and at last finds before it that final wall which we call death, what is it to die, but once more to have the wall open before one's wondering and expectant eyes, and to hear the same voice that has led one through the doors of life, say: "Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions. I am the door!"

PERRY

GOD'S IMAGE IN MAN

## ALFRED TYLER PERRY

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## GOD'S IMAGE IN MAN

PRES. ALFRED T. PERRY, D.D.

"*Whose is this image and superscription?*"—Matt. 22 : 20.

THE Pharisees near the end of Jesus' life tried to ensnare Him by an awkward question regarding tribute. The Master eluded their snare by calling attention to a legal relation already established between the Jews and Cæsar, which was witnessed by their use of Roman money. Cæsar's right must therefore be acknowledged, as must every other of similar nature. "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." The principle here appealed to by Jesus is one of wide application. Relations establish duties. The image and superscription are a constant reminder both of relation and of duty.

This principle has application in many directions. Because we are citizens of this government we are bound by certain duties to that government. So long as we admit the relation we must assume the duty. So long as we seek its protection and enjoy its benefits, we are bound to perform the duties of citizenship. The citizen who evades taxes, who neglects to vote, who puts party above principle,

or selfish interest above the State, who corrupts the ballot, or perverts justice, or seeks by bribery to obtain favorable legislation, who cheats or plunders the public treasury, he by refusing duty is denying relation. To him the State owes nothing. He is an enemy, nay, a traitor, not a true citizen. If we call ourselves citizens we must assume the duties of citizenship.

Again, we stand in certain relations to others. We are bound in social groups, to family, to neighbors, to business companions, to friends. These relations bring duties. He who demands his rights in these relations must be ready to fulfil all duties. Indeed too much emphasis upon rights means friction in all these relations. Emphasis upon duties means harmony and efficiency. No man or woman has a right to enter into these relations seeking their benefits, without a readiness to perform all the duties resulting from them.

True as are these applications and important as they are for every individual, interesting as would be the further development of thought in these directions, I desire to call attention more in detail to another and I am persuaded the most important application.

The latest word of science agrees with the first word of Genesis. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Evolution cannot escape this creative beginning. Lord Kelvin has recently told us that

"science positively affirms creative power." Evolution may show us how through countless ages the myriad forms of matter and life have come to be, but back there at the start is that constant affirmation both of the latest science and of religion, "In the beginning God." From Him all things have come forth. But this is not all. The universe was not merely started in motion by a Creator; we are taught to-day that God who created is in His creation. The process of evolution itself cannot be independent of Him. "In Him we live and move and have our being." All is a sort of self-revelation of God, the expression of His mind, the working out of His plan. So both science and religion unite to-day in these affirmations, that all that is comes from God, and exists in God. Science, or rather the philosophy based on science, is learning now to spell out another lesson long taught by religion. As God is the source and support of all, so God must be the goal of all. This, I say, scientific philosophy herself is to-day discerning. For, granted a continuous development through countless ages, what is the goal to be reached? The mind refuses to be satisfied with an infinite projection in a straight line; there must be somewhere some end to be reached. Eternal progress is unthinkable. Creation cannot move forever in a straight line; it must reach a finality somewhere. God the Creator and the indwelling power and

guide must accomplish His will, and cannot be satisfied with mere progress. What can this goal be except it be found in Him? Evolution then is not a straight line, it is a circle. It starts from God; it finds its end in God. From Him we come; in Him we live; unto Him we go. God is in every part; and God is the end of all. We are accustomed to say that in every stage of evolution there is a looking backward and a looking forward. The law of progress binds all together. Are we to stop with man? Must he look only backward or may he look forward, and if so to what goal? What is the completion of the development for him? Surely it must be in that which is highest in him. Here must we find the promise of the future.

When we study man as he presses on his restless way, ever aspiring, ever achieving, as we analyze his capacities and seek the source of his powers, we are renewedly impressed by the evidence that he is more than a product of nature. Bound to nature indeed is he by many and indissoluble ties. His body links him with the whole animal creation. Life, motion, sight, hearing, pain, weakness, death —these he shares with the animals. He is subject to sun and cold, the sport of wind and wave, the victim of nature's uncontrolled forces.

But man is more than this, and that which makes him man is not in his body. There is

that which we call in our imperfect knowledge the soul. Here is the man himself. And the soul—the real man, who tabernacles in this body of flesh—refuses to be bound by its limitations. He tames the forces of nature or evades their disastrous effects; he rises superior to physical defect or weakness. He asserts his right to be the lord of all creation; to use it all for his ends, to make all subservient to his wishes. Man turns and looks down the long line of evolution through which life has ascended and he owns his kinship with these lower forms—lower he calls them, believing himself to be the apex of this development. By his body he is linked with all the material creation, but he turns to look upward to discern the final goal of all evolution and he recognizes that there is in him the promise and potency of divinity. Man stands then, thus far, as the climax of the evolutionary process. He owns his kinship with that which is below him, but he is not the end of creation. The circle must be completed. Evolution starts with God, it can only end in God. From Him we came forth, unto Him we go. As man finds himself bound by his body to the lower creation, so by his soul he finds himself akin to God. This is what we mean when we say that man was made in the image of God. There are in him capacities and powers that separate him from the brute, that link him to God. He bears an image and super-

scription that testify to this relation, that show he was meant for God. And out of this supreme relation comes the supreme duty of life—to become more like God.

Let us admit that this image of God is often dim, that it is marred by sin, like the worn and battered coin we sometimes see. Yet in the fact that the essential image is still there, in the fact that therefore man cannot find his true goal except in God, we find the reason for Jesus' command: "Render unto God the things which are God's." Let us then look at some aspects in which the image of God is seen in man, that by beholding the relation we may also see clearly the duty involved in it.

Man is distinguished from all the animal creation by his reason. He sees the world as does the bird, the beast; its sounds attract or alarm him; its forces play upon him as upon them. But he sees beneath the surface; he is not satisfied with appearances. He thinks upon what he sees and hears and feels. He finds relations between things; he groups; he classifies. He searches for causes; he penetrates to origins. He traces development; he seeks for the goal of being. The universe becomes to him not a series of chance phenomena, but an ordered cosmos. Persuaded that the world has a creator, he finds evidences of creative thought all about him. And what is all science but, as Kepler said, thinking God's

thoughts after Him. To be capable of thinking God's thoughts shows kinship with the divine. Man must be like God or he cannot know God as revealed in nature. In the words of Professor Gwatkin, " Science, and even thought about nature, would be impossible if there were not that in nature which speaks to us in language our mind can understand. And that which speaks to us in language our mind can understand cannot be anything else than a kindred mind revealed in nature. Our true affinity and likeness to the power immanent in nature is the necessary postulate, not only of religion, but of science, and even of thought itself. Scientific knowledge would be impossible if we had no likeness and affinity to the mind which speaks to us in the facts of the universe; and thought itself would be no more than idle fancy if all true human thought were not the tracing of divine thought which has gone before it."

If, then, bearing the image of God in our minds we may think God's thoughts after Him, we must do so. Duty summons us. We must render unto God the things that are His. We must think the truth, for God is true. Not all human thought is God's thought; only true thought is God's thought. We must seek to know the truth, everywhere and always. We must be open-minded to receive the truth; we must search for the truth; we must cling to the truth. Thinking truth we shall think

God's thought and only so; and this in the realm of science, of philosophy, of religion, in private conduct and social relations. Here saint and scholar come into harmony. Both seek to think the thoughts of God. All truth is one, all true thoughts find their reconciliation, nay their unity in the divine mind. Not only is scientific error untrue, but in the great words of Dr. Hart, "Every thought which is base, or vile, or selfish, is first of all untrue." If we know the truth, if we think God's thoughts, we shall be led upward to Him. We still are far, it is true, from that perfect knowledge to which we aspire. We know in part, and often misread the meaning of what we see; but we may press on ever to know more and more of truth.

Oh mind of man, Godlike in nature, infinite in capacity, thou art set in a world of order to penetrate its secrets, to find its laws, to understand its purpose. Thou art placed in a world of discord and sin, to discern the ideal, to discover life's goal, to point out life's laws. Then think the truth, live to know, to proclaim, to manifest the truth, the eternal truth of God.

The image of God in man is manifested also in man's capacity to enjoy and love. Because like God we may take delight in the same things, find beauty in the same flower, experience pleasure in the same wonderful adaptations, know the joy of loving and being

loved. We all recognize the capacities for enjoyment in man, which vary so widely in different individuals. We have pleasures that we share with the brute creation, the satisfaction of hunger, the very joy of living. But we have pleasures which none but our fellowmen can enjoy. Music and art and poetry carry to the human spirit only their inspiring message. And there are joys too deep for words which touch the very inmost harp of our being. These are divine, these are Godlike. Because we are like God we may experience these divine joys—love and peace. Can there be a closer test of our characters than this: Are our pleasures Godlike? In the things we enjoy are we showing the image of God? There can of course be no question but that the highest joys the human soul can experience are those which it shares with the Spirit of God. He who grovels in his pleasures, who finds in the coarse, the brutal, the selfish, that which gives enjoyment, has missed the keenest joy of which the soul of man is capable. Here, again, the image of God is seen in man, and from this comes the duty to aspire in our pleasures, to manifest our kinship with the divine by loving the things He loves, and rejoicing in the things in which He rejoices.

The crown of man's personality, and that which marks most clearly his kinship with God, is his will, his freedom of choice. To

think the thoughts of God, to love what He loves, is a great thing; to enter into His plans and to become a co-worker with Him is greater. What are knowledge and feeling for, except to see clearly the path of action and to be strong to walk in it? Both are comparatively useless unless they issue in choice and deed. Why are we made Godlike in mind and heart except that we may be Godlike in act? Here is the supreme nobility of man. To know God's thought is to know His purpose; to trace His revelation of Himself is to discern His plan for man. The great end of life then must be to secure the fulfilment of that best purpose for men, to help carry out that divine plan.

Oh how far from this conception is this bustling, selfish world! We hear the jangle of strife and greed. Men worship Mammon; they seek earthly riches; they pursue sensual pleasures; they run after base ambitions; they destroy each other in their madness. Is this man made in God's image? Alas, how marred and obscured that image! Yet underneath all there is still that divine capacity. The individual may be rescued from such selfish pursuits; new visions may be given him of better goals. He may yet repent, and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This is the only path to self-realization, the only method by which the goal of being may be attained.

If we should apply this test to our own lives, would we find that we are given to carrying out God's plans? Do we judge personal interests or public policy, do we estimate civic ends or social measures, by such a standard? And yet what is the truth here? Are not God's plans the best for man and for society? And are not His plans sure of realization? Is not His kingdom certain of dominion? To fight against God is to be crusht to powder; to ignore God is to be pushed aside and left as driftwood upon the river's bank; to work with God is to make life a real success, and to make a permanent contribution to the progress of mankind. Alas for the narrow vision that puts selfish interests first! Alas for the blindness that considers business of more concern than morals! Alas for the base heart that cares more for selfish profits than for social benefits! Is God's image there on the human will, capable of choosing good or evil? To God must it be given.

Here then is the conclusion of the whole matter. God's image in man, testified by these divine capacities of thought and feeling and choice, speaks of an essential relation between man and God. Man is made by God, is made for God. This image and superscription testify to this essential and admitted relation. They also disclose the supreme duty of man. He must render unto God the things that are God's. These capacities must not be buried

like talents in a napkin, they must not be stunted for lack of exercise, they must not be perverted to base uses; they must be developed through use and consecrated to Him who gave them. Man's highest development as man, can only come when he becomes more entirely divine. Crown of creation, acme of evolution he setnds, only that he may, by his free choice, bind back all creation to its source, and demonstrate the purpose of all by his willing obedience to this divine law. So nature receives its crown, so knowledge reaches its goal, so the purpose of God is complete in the perfection of humanity. Far lies that goal from present attainment, long is the road to its realization. But as we see here and there, individuals looming up from the common mass and approximating the ideal; as we see leaders arise who, by words of eloquence or lives of purity, inspire men to strive for that which is above; as we mark the upward progress of the race through the centuries; nay more, as we see in the Man of Galilee the incarnate Savior, the fulness of that image, the completeness of that relation, and the perfect fulfilment of that duty, we are encouraged to believe that the goal is not unattainable, that the purpose of God shall at last be accomplished, that His plan shall be perfected, that evolution shall reach its end in the perfect response of man to God, in the full realization of God's image in man.

PIERSON

OUR LORD'S PRIMARY LESSON IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

## ARTHUR TAPPAN PIERSON

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# OUR LORD'S PRIMARY LESSON IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER.

ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D.D.

*"Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet."*—Matt. 6 : 6.

THREE things stand out prominently in this brief injunction; first, the individual approach to God; second, the secret place of communion; third, the specific object, prayer.

The word, "closet," is unusual. The original word is found but four times in the New Testament, in one instance being rendered, "secret chambers," and in another, "storehouse." The words here used by our Lord closely resemble those of Isaiah 26 : 20 : "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee."

There is in both cases marked emphasis on the singular number of the second personal pronoun. In Isaiah, the opening call is plural, or collective, "Come, my people," but immediately changes to the singular, "Enter thou into thy chambers," and so, in our Lord's adaptation of these words, conspicuous stress is laid on the singular, "thou." The injunction is intensely individual. "But

*thou,* when *thou* prayest, enter into *thy* closet; and when *thou* hast shut *thy* door pray to *thy* Father, who is in secret, and *thy* Father shall reward *thee* openly." Eight times, in so brief a space, is the singular pronoun used, surely not without purpose.

What do these four words suggest: "Enter into thy closet"? Closet means simply a close, a closed place, shut in for privacy, shut out from intrusion and interruption. To Jewish hearers such language would naturally suggest the one place that was preeminently a secret chamber—the inmost court of tabernacle and temple, where God specially dwelt, known as the holy of holies.

That was preeminently a secret chamber, a closed place, having neither door nor window; unlike many an Oriental court which is open to the sky, it was roofed in and without skylight. It was always shut. A door which we open, as we enter a room, we must also close behind us; but the veil in front of the holiest of all, raised as the high priest went in, fell back as soon as it was released, and so kept the secrecies of God's chamber shut out from mortal eyes.

Here then was one place, peculiarly marked by silence, secrecy, solitude and separation. Only one person ever entered here, at a time, "the high priest, once every year, alone." Two parties never met there save himself and God. It was, in a unique sense, the place of

which God could say, " Thou and I "—the one closet, shut-in place, secret chamber for the meeting of one man with his Maker.

Moreover, its one conspicuous solitary article of furniture was the mercy-seat, the appointed meeting place, the basis of fellowship between the suppliant and the Hearer of prayer. And thus the three conditions, suggested by the injunction, " Enter into thy closet," were met here as nowhere else; here was the secret chamber, the individual approach and the prayerful communion.

Here we have the key to this first lesson on prayer: the " closet " is the holy of holies where the praying soul meets God alone, and communes with Him at the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat.

The highest prayer is impossible, save as the human suppliant deliberately seeks to meet God absolutely alone. To secure such aloneness we are bidden to " enter into the closet," to find some place and time where we may shut ourselves in with Him. This is made emphatic by repetition in another form: " And when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, who is in secret," a second word here used meaning essentially the same as closet—a secret place.

In praying, we need some place and time, free from needless interruption and intrusion. The eyelid drops over the organ of vision, shutting out all external objects; and, if the

ear were similarly supplied with an earlid, to shut out all sounds, as the eyelid does all sights, a closet could be instantly found and entered even in the throng, and the spirit might secretly commune with God in the crowded streets or assemblies.

But, in the absence of any such natural provision for such complete seclusion and exclusion, our Lord counsels us, when we pray, to get somehow, somewhere, a silent, secret communing place with God, as not only the very basis of prayer, but of all holy living built upon prayer. The more completely we can separate ourselves from all others, worldly pursuits and pleasures, distracting cares and diverting thoughts, shutting out all else but God, the more perfect is the fitness of the hour and place to the purpose. Those who know how needful and helpful such a secret time and place for prayer are, will secure, at any cost, the silent season even tho, like the psalmist, they rise before others wake, and "prevent the dawning of the morning."

Every praying soul needs to meet God absolutely alone. There are inner secrets which no other human being however intimate ought to know, or indeed can know.

"The heart knoweth his own bitterness;
And a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy."

We turn ourselves inside out not even to a

bosom friend: we would not if we could, and could not if we would. To the inmost secret chambers there is no open door; they are locked and sealed; words supply no key to them, and the seal of silence and secrecy is inviolable. But " all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do "; and so the closet, where we meet God alone and only, is the one place for all such secrets. Nothing else will supply its place. Public worship, the " family altar," or the more private prayer in which only husband and wife join before God—none of these can take the place of the solitary closet. In one respect they who are " one flesh," are still " twain "; for neither can ever fully know the other. But while, to our most intimate friend we cannot reveal everything, from God we can conceal nothing. His omniscient eye pierces to the secret chambers, despite the lock which no man can pick, the seal which no man dares break. He reads the thoughts yet " afar off," like forms faintly seen in the dim distance, and hears the word yet unspoken " in the tongue," And it is as to these secrets which must be brought to the light in His presence, exposed, confessed, renounced, corrected before Him, that the closet is meant to give facility and freedom for converse with God. Hence this initial command to cultivate habitual aloneness with Him. Like Jacob at Peniel, each suppliant must be " left alone "

at times: the " thou " must be absolute and not the " ye," when the closet is entered.

Why now is such stress laid, in our Lord's primary lesson on prayer, upon this shutting out of all else, and closing in of the suppliant with God?

It is, first of all, in order to what, as his third instrument of " Holy Living," Jeremy Taylor calls " the practise of the presence of God."

Nothing else has such an effect upon character and conduct, as this sense of God's presence; and nothing is so difficult, nay impossible of attainment, so long as we neglect God's appointed means.

God is a Spirit, and must be worshiped in the spirit. Invisible, inaudible, intangible, He cannot be tested by the senses: they utterly fail as channels of impression or communication. His subtle essence evades all carnal approach or analysis. He must therefore be otherwise known, if at all: the spirit alone has the higher senses which, being exercised to discern good and evil, can enable us to perceive God and hold communication with Him. Hence, to those who live a sinful or even worldly life, and are carnally minded, even the reality and verity of His existence become matters of practical, if not theoretical, doubt. There is much virtual atheism in mere unbelief. It is possible to recite the creed, " I believe in God, the Father Al-

mighty,'' without ever for one moment having had a real, true sense of the presence of God. Many who do not deny that God is, do not know that He is.

Such sense of the divine existence, and realization of the divine presence may be cultivated. God has appointed two means, which, when used jointly, never fail: first a meditative reading of Holy Scripture, and secondly a habitual communion with Him in the closet. These two are so closely related, that they are not only mutually helpful, but operate upon us in ways almost precisely alike Both introduce us into God's secret chambers.

When a devout disciple takes up God's Word for studious thought, he naturally lifts his heart to Him who alone can unveil the eyes of his understanding to behold wondrous things out of His law. As he reads and searches, meditating therein, the same Spirit who first inspired the Word, illumines his mind. New light is thrown upon the sacred page, so that what was obscure or hidden, becomes visible and legible; and new clearness of sight and insight is given so that spiritual vision becomes more capable of seeing, more keen-sighted and far-sighted.

Those who have felt this double effect of the Spirit's teaching bear witness that the Bible becomes a transformed book. Best of all books before, it is now the Book of God—a

house of many mansions, in which new doors constantly open into new apartments, massive and magnificent, God's art galleries, museums of curious things, chambers of disclosed mysteries, treasuries of celestial gems. The devout student is transported with wonder and delight. Words open with new meanings, affording glimpses into depths and heights, breadths and lengths, that are infinite. Looking at a firmament which was before clouded, the clouds are parting and heavenly constellations are visible. Meanwhile the eye has become telescopic; and where before were seen a few scattered stars or an indistinct nebulous cloud, everything is ablaze with the glories of countless and many colored lights. When the Author of the Word becomes Instructor and Interpreter of His own textbook, heaven's great classic is read with the notes and comments of the divine Author himself; and so he who devoutly searches the Scriptures, finds in them both eternal life and the testimony of Jesus; the reverent, prayerful study of the Word of God is the cure of all honest doubt as to its divine origin, and the all-convincing proof of its plenary inspiration.

But, as the First Psalm reminds us, to find such delight in the law of the Lord, one must meditate therein day and night; be a sort of sacramental tree of life, planted by the rivers of water. Mark the instructive, emphatic

metaphor. A tree is permanently planted in the soil. Its roots are fixed organs of nutrition, constantly subordinate to the double purpose of growth and fruitfulness. Through the spongelets at the extremities of the roots, the tree takes up the water of the river into itself, transmuting it into sap which deposits woody fiber in the branches and becomes juice in the fruit. The disciple, planted by the river of God—the Word which goeth forth out of His mouth, takes up into himself the very water of life, translating truth into character, and precepts and promises into practise. He reads God's Word and, like the cattle that chew the cud, ruminates upon it; and so comes to know God through His Word, as we know men through candid and self-revealing utterances. To meditate on God's words introduces us to the secret chambers of God's thoughts, and imparts insight into God's character. One becomes sure there is a God, who sees Him unveiled in the Scriptures, hears His still small voice in their audience chambers, traces His footprints on their golden pavements; and, in times of temptation, trial, sorrow, or doubt, God's words, brought to remembrance, and applied by the Spirit to his needs, become, individually, God's words to him. He consults the oracles of God, and they give answer. This is to the unbelieving one of the closed mysteries, a stumbling-block of mysticism, or the foolish-

ness of fanaticism; but, to him whose experience has been enriched by it, an open mystery, a fact as indisputable as any in the realm of matter.

The other method of the practise of the presence of God is communion with Him in the closet. And how like to Scripture study is the process whereby prayer introduces to His fellowship! It implies meditation; opens the secret chambers and reveals God; discloses marvels and unlocks mysteries; makes one sure that God "is and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," which is the divinely declared condition of all acceptable, prevailing approach!

Upon this method of cultivating acquaintance with God, the great Teacher would specially fix attention in this, His primary lesson on prayer.

All other presence hinders the practise of the presence of God. The thought of human auditors or observers prevents the closest approach and the highest power in prayer. At the very moment when the supreme need is that all the faculties and activities of the being shall be converged and concentrated, centralized and facilized, as are scattered rays of light by a concave speculum or a convex lens, the mind is diverted and distracted, and the attention divided, by the thought that another human being hears or sees. Such divided attention must hinder the realization

of the presence of the unseen God. Nor is it hard to see the reason why.

That profound lesson, taught the Samaritan woman on the subject of worship, includes prayer as one of its highest forms or acts. God, being a spirit, must be worshiped as such, and can be approached only by what is spiritual in man. There is among men bodily contact and communion, as when hand joins hand, eye looks into eye, or words pass from one mouth to another ear. But, as God can neither be seen, heard, nor touched, there can be no such sensible contact between man and God; being a spirit, He can be approached only spiritually, that is by contact between our spirits and His.

In order to such contact, and that it may be real, recognized and conscious, all the spiritual faculties need to be active, on the alert; and all diversions or distractions of mind must be avoided which make impossible exclusive attention to the divine object of thought. But we are so constituted as to be unable really to fix attention on more than one subject or object at a time. Hence, in God's economy of nature, many necessary acts are so provided for as to be automatic, like walking, only half conscious and semi-voluntary; for, were it needful to concentrate all attention upon every step, we could, while walking, give heed to nothing else.

Moreover, we cannot fully exercise any one

sense while any of the others is fully exercised and occupied, there being room for but one thorough sense-impression at a time. We cannot fix the eye upon a picture so as to study its effects in drawing and coloring, and yet at the same time give our ears to the hearing of a masterpiece of music, so as to observe critically its melody and harmony.

Especially do we find that, to occupy the physical senses is so far to divert the mind from purely intellectual processes however simple. For instance, in some late experiments in psychology, the test was made, how far an observer, watching rapid changes of color, could detect the delicate transitions from one shade to another; and it was found that if, while so engaged, the simplest exercise in mental arithmetic were attempted, tho only the addition or multiplication table, the power to discern these gradual changes of color was arrested. Man is constituted to do properly and thoroughly, but one thing at once.

Acquaintance with the unseen God is the first of all acquisitions. To attain the closest approach, to get the most vivid sense of His presence, and so, the greatest power and blessing at the mercy-seat, all thought of men and of this world must be shut out, and all interruptions avoided that come through the senses or the imagination. So far only as we learn the art of thinking only of God, will this great lesson of closet prayer be learned, for, on the

measure of our realization of the unseen Presence, all else must depend.

Our Lord's first lesson on prayer gives another hint of great value, tho rather implied than openly exprest. He tells us that the Father who is in secret, or in the secret place, and who sees in the darkness of the soul's holy of holies, rewards the suppliant openly—" in the open." When the high priest approached to God it is neither recorded nor intimated that he was wont to offer up supplication; the element of petition is nowhere prominent. He seems to have gone in to the holiest, to " appear before God "—to present himself, with the blood, before the mercy-seat—his presence constituting his plea; and the blood of atonement, both the sign of his obedience and the pledge of his acceptance. There he seems to have waited not so much to offer up to God prayers and supplications, as to receive from God impressions and revelations.

The " Urim and Thummim " may have some connection with this revealing of God's mind and will. Some think that the light of the Shekinah fire, shining on the breast-plate of the high priest, made successive letters of the names with which its stones were graven, stand out conspicuous, so that he could, in characters of light, spell out the divine message; and it is a curious fact that the twelve names, taken together, contain nearly every letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

However this be, the mercy-seat was mainly a place, not of petition but of communication, of impartation from God, of divine revelation. The high priest waited there for a message which he bore back to the people in benediction.

The closet is not only an oratory—a place for prayer—but an observatory, where we may get new views and revelations of God. There is a quest higher than mere request—a search after knowledge of God and communication from Him. Here devout souls learn what is meant by communion—which is always mutual—implying not only prayer offered, but answer received. The praying soul speaks to God, and hears God speak—gets as well as gives—and finds the most precious part of this communion, not in requests imparted Godward, but in returns imparted manward, the reception of divine impressions and communications. The reward, promised, comes while yet he speaks and waits before the Lord: believing he receives, and receiving enjoys. Such a reward cannot be kept secret. It makes the heart to overflow and even the face to shine.

True prayer, in its highest form and reach, is not only impartive but receptive: the whole nature going out in adoration, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, intercession; but also opening all its channels for the incoming of blessing. Communion becomes intercommuni-

cation—Jacob's ladder resting in the closet and reaching to the throne—and angels descend to bring blessing, as well as ascend to bear petition; or, as a simple Japanese convert puts it, prayer is like the well where one bucket comes down while the other goes up, only that it is always the empty bucket that goes up and the full one that comes back.

Of this aspect of prayer, as a revelation of God to the suppliant, the current definitions take little notice. The Westminster standards define prayer as "the offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of His Spirit, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." Here is no recognition of meditative communion with the divine Presence for the sake of a present communication from God to the soul.

With most praying people, the fundamental if not exhaustive conception of prayer is asking somewhat of God. This is surely not the whole of prayer; little more than a beginning is made without some disclosure of God to the soul. Our Lord himself at times withdrew from all human companionships, for secret communion with the Father, as when He went out "into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God." Such all-night interviews mark all great crises of His life on earth; but it cannot be supposed that He spent all these hours in continuous supplica-

tion, but rather, like Gideon, on the plains of Jezreel, spread out His whole being like fleece, to drink in the heavenly dew of the Father's presence, and in the strength of this celestial nectar confront new duties, trials and temptations.

Thus meditative prayer, like reflective reading of the Word of God, becomes a perpetual means and medium of communion with God, and so, also, of revelation of God, communion both leading to, and itself becoming, revelation. He who converses with a friend, habitually, cannot doubt his existence and presence; and God meant this simple converse with Himself to be a demonstration that He is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—so convincing as to dispel all doubts, itself the sufficient proof of His reality and verity as the ever present, living, helping God.

The humblest believer, however unlettered or unlearned, may thus, in this school of prayer attain to practical certainty in divine things; he needs no volumes of apologetics or evidences of Christianity: in practising the presence of God, the proofs, tho he cannot always formulate them for others, become convincing to himself. Indeed we oftenest find such assurance in the humbler, simpler disciples, the ignorant and unlearned, rather than the princes or great scholars of the Church, and so there is a proneness to asso-

ciate such faith with credulity, if not with superstition. Witness that abominable lying maxim, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion." But the inference is wrong; for, while the more intelligent and intellectual often lean to their own understanding, and depend on human logic and philosophy for confirmation of their faith, he who, being untaught of men and books, has no other means of strengthening his assurance save converse with God, is compelled to learn in His school, where logic and philosophy are never perverted to the purposes of fallacy and sophistry. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, abides under the shadow of the Almighty"; and no darts of Satanic doubt can pierce him, save as they first pass through the divine "wings" which are his covering and shelter.

Here, then, is our Lord's initial lesson upon prayer; and as, in any first lesson, a master teacher naturally lays down fundamental laws or first principles, here He lays the cornerstone of all true prayer, namely: Prayer is at bottom the meeting of a human suppliant alone with God, for supplication and communion at the mercy-seat, and revelation of the existence, presence and character of God.

It is plain why His preliminary caution is directed against hypocritical ostentation. The hypocrites "love to pray, standing in the synagogs and in the corners of the streets that

they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." In praying, as in almsgiving and fasting, hypocrisy courts publicity—it is all "to be seen of men." The hypocrite's prayer is addrest to a human audience rather than to the divine ear; it has reference mainly to outward appearance and transient impression. Hence publicity is an object; and in the synagogs where the crowds throng, at the street corners or crossways commanding all points of the compass at once, he takes his stand that he may be seen of men. The formalist may not be a hypocrite, but his mind is taken up with the externals, and here again "the letter killeth," and only "the spirit giveth life."

Christ would have praying souls learn, first of all, that being seen of men is to be avoided rather than courted. To concentrate all thought and desire upon God, forget all else in order not to forget Him, and so be lost in the absorbing sense of His presence—this is the first secret of power in prayer, as also of all power in holy living and serving.

This first lesson is also the last, for there is no higher fruit of habitual closet communion with God than this new sense of divine realities. Paul gently rebukes those who have not, by reason of use, exercised their senses—trained them to keenness—to discern good and evil. The spirit as well as the body, has its senses and they are trained to acuteness

and exactness by holy exercise. Imagination is the sense of the unseen; reason, the sense of truth and falsehood; conscience, the sense of right and wrong; sensibility, the sense of the attractive and repulsive; memory, the sense of the past. The understanding and heart have eyes with which to see God's beck and glance, ears with which to hear His still small voice, organs of touch wherewith to " handle " Him and see that it is He Himself. The closet is the school for the exercise and education of these senses. There we go to learn to look at things unseen, eternal; to hear the divine whisper; to catch the scent of heavenly gardens; to taste and see that the Lord is good. And to reach such results, we need aloneness with God, senses fixed upon Himself.

The closet supplies a key to many mysteries of Scripture biography, like Jacob's experience at Bethel—" Surely God was in this place and I knew it not; this "—a desert place with a stone pillow—" is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven ": and particularly, at Peniel, where later on, he saw " the face of God " and got a lifelong blessing, the supplanter of men becoming the prince of God. It is when we are " left alone " that revelations come. Elijah was bidden first to hide himself, and then show himself unto Ahab; it was the hiding that made the showing such a power. When Elisha " went in and shut the door upon them

twain and prayed unto the Lord," there came out from that secret chamber a dead child, brought back to life. Nathanael under the fig tree was holding secret converse with God; and, when Christ said to him, " Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee," the guileless Israelite recognized in Him One whom he had met in the secret place, and who now as then read his thoughts.

To get such impressions of God, in closet communion, there is needful the time-element. Rapid glances always leave comparatively transient impressions, but a gaze, which takes time to fix itself on an object, takes in its whole impress so as to leave its image permanently in the mind.

True, our Lord warns us that we are not heard for our much speaking: it is not by many words or long prayers that we prevail. It is nevertheless also true that haste or hurry in prayer defeats the main end, preventing that calmness, concentration, peace and quiet of soul which helps to revelation. The word, " reflection," suggests a power to mirror divine verities and realities. To all such reflection hurry and worry are fatal. He who rushes into the presence of God, hastens through a few formal petitions, and then hastens back to outside cares and pursuits, does not tarry long enough in the secret chamber, to lose the impression of what is without, and

get the impress of what is within. He does not take time to fix his gaze on the unseen and eternal, and many a so-called praying man has never once really met and seen God in the closet. His spirit, disturbed and perturbed, tossed up and down and driven to and fro by worldly thoughts and cares, can no more reflect God than a ruffled lake can mirror the heavens above it. To see God reflected in the heart-depths, one must stay long enough for the storm to be calmed, and the soul to become placid enough to mirror heaven.

When such communion does become real, prayer ceases to be mere duty and becomes delight, all sense of obligation lost in privilege. Love seeks the company of its object. If we cultivate human companionship for its own sake, mutely sitting in the presence of one whom we devotedly love, shall not our love to God make it an object to shut ourselves in with Him at times just to enjoy Him? Is there no taint of selfishness in prayer which knows no higher motive than to ask some favor? Jude bids us "pray in the Holy Ghost" as one means to keep ourselves in the love of God; as Archbishop Usher, in his last days, when his animal heat failed, kept himself in the warm sunshine. In the closet one learns to keep himself in the love of God, finding there the Sunbeam whose light illumines, whose love warms, whose life quickens. God's presence becomes the atmosphere without

which spiritual life has no breath. Such habitual abiding in the presence of God, and dwelling upon His perfections develops an enamoring love, which led Zinzendorf and Tholuck to say, "I have but one passion: and it is He and He alone!"

Such God-revealing habits of prayer lay the very corner-stone of all holy living. Everything vital to godliness is nourished on closet air. Prayer is spiritual respiration and the secret place supplies its oxygen and ozone.

For example, what a power both to reveal and to prevent sin is this sense of the presence of God which is learned in secret prayer.

We must not be surprised when the communion with God that reveals Him unveils ourselves: "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." That same Shekinah fire, which makes the golden wings and faces of the cherubim shine, pierces every disguise and shows the very thoughts and intents of the heart, like a sword piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. Secret prayer is a revelation of self as well as of God. We must endure and even invoke its searching ray:

> "Search me, O God, and know my heart;
> Try me and know my thoughts;
> And see if there be in me any wicked way,
> And lead me in the everlasting way."

Daniel was so faultless that even enemies could find nothing in him to accuse save his

faith in God and his prayer to God; yet, in the presence of that Glory, even his "comeliness was turned into corruption," and Isaiah in that Presence, cried, "Wo is me; for I am a man of unclean lips and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." But all such self-revelation and self-condemnation are only blessings, for they are the result of a divine vision, and the divine answer to such self-abasement is a new communication and exaltation. When Daniel abhorred himself, he heard a voice, saying, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, fear not; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard and I am come for thy words." When Isaiah bewailed his unclean lips, the seraph touched those same lips with a live coal from off God's altar, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged." When Peter felt so unfit for the Lord's companionship that he involuntarily besought Him to depart from him, he heard only the assuring answer, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt capture men alive."

This sense of the divine Presence, which reveals sin, also prevents it. In the crisis of temptation Joseph's answer to the syren voice of the tempter evinced his habit of thinking of God, and it was natural to say with himself,

"How can I do this great thing and sin against God?" Paul reminds Corinthian disciples that they are the very temple—the holy of holies—of God, because His Spirit dwelleth in them; and, on the basis of this awe-inspiring fact, he builds that exhortation, "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." In the hour of temptation, sudden, overwhelming, overpowering, what a safeguard is the thought, the conviction, the consciousness, "Thou, God, seest me." I can go nowhere from Thy presence. The wings of the morning are not swift enough, nor the uttermost parts of the earth far enough, to remove me from Thine eye and Thine hand. Such are the profound, devout meditations suggested by that psalm of the presence of God unsurpassed for poetry or piety. When one feels God near, searching the inmost depths of being with omniscient glance; by omnipresent companionship with us because in us, always and everywhere; and with omnipotent energy creating, upholding, strengthening—how easy and natural to do what pleases God, and say to all seductive allurements, "My heart is fixed." Only when the sense of God's presence is lost, can voluntary sin be possible.

Again, what intrepid courage in witness for God and heroic duty, this sense of His presence imparts!

Elijah, the great reformer of abuses, and rebuker of idolatry and iniquity in high places, cultivated this consciousness of God. His characteristic phrase was, "Jehovah, God of Israel, before whom I stand"—as tho he felt himself to be constantly standing in the presence of his divine Master—a servant whose eyes were to the eye and hand of that Master, watching and waiting to be guided by a beck or even a glance. Because he thus stood before God, he could stand unabashed before Ahab and Jezebel.

In the old days it was customary to open the Connecticut legislature with an "election sermon." On one occasion the chosen preacher was one of the Strong brothers, and his modesty shrank from the grave responsibility. On the way to the place of assembly, he disclosed to his brother his oppressive burden of reluctance to face such an audience, a body among whom would be found lawyers and judges, generals and statesmen, doctors of divinity and doctors of law, governors and ex-governors—the flower of the commonwealth. "How can I venture before such an audience?" "You have only to remember," answered his brother, "that other Presence, so august, that in comparison all human presence becomes utterly insignificant, and preach as in that Presence alone." With this thought, he went fearlessly to the discharge of his duty. Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Cox recalled

this incident when in a momentous crisis of his life he addrest the Evangelical Alliance with its representatives of all nations, and the thought of that same Presence nerved his fainting spirit.

So went John Baptist before Herod, Paul before Agrippa, Felix, Nero; Luther before the Diet of Worms, Knox before Queen Mary. This same sense of the Father, who never left Him alone, enabled Him whom the prophet called "The Servant of Jehovah," to go with infinite calmness before Herod, Caiaphas and Pilate, utterly careless of human opinion, indifferent alike to censure or applause, because He could say, "I do always those things which please Him!" After a severe rebuke to those who made void the commandments of God through their tradition, His disciples said, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" but He calmly answered, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." He could not modify His message on account of the opposition of the hearer, but the hearer must accommodate himself to the message; and so will every true messenger of God answer human opposers, if he is wont to cultivate and cherish the sense of the presence of God.

This practise of the presence of God is the secret of both fidelity and cheerfulness in the discharge of common duty.

Whatever helps us to holy living must be found in those secret chambers of devout study of the Word and habitual communion with a prayer-hearing God. Any burden can be borne, any trial endured, any responsibility assumed, when this sense of God is active and constant. To be about His "Father's business" was our Lord's secret of untiring service and unalloyed satisfaction; and we, His followers, work out the mission of a complete life while we feel that God works in us to will and to do!

Hence Paul wrote to Corinth: "Let every man, in that calling wherein he is found, therein abide with God." When renewing grace finds one engaged in an honest calling, however humble, he has no need to change his vocation, but only to take a new and divine partner, henceforth abiding with God in his daily sphere of work. Jesus of Nazareth wrought at the bench of a carpenter until, at thirty, He entered on His public ministry, teaching us that no workman need be ashamed of his craft when he follows it as God's servant; whether it be the bench of the carpenter, the shoemaker, or the judge; the loom of the weaver or the wheel of the potter; the desk of the author, the studio of the artist, or the throne of the emperor—wherever service is rendered to God there is a pulpit of witness, a shrine of worship.

From the letters of a humble monk, known

as Brother Lawrence, it appears that, in a menial office, as cook in a convent, he was led, by this suggestion of Jeremy Taylor about the practise of God's presence, so to cultivate the habit of thinking of God as ever with him, a partner in his lowly calling, that it became easier to think of Him as present than as absent; and that convent kitchen became as another garden of Eden, and every day as one of the days of heaven upon earth.

This sense of the divine presence is in every way so helpful to prayer that in exact proportion to its vividness and constancy is prayer effective and powerful.

Every element and exercise of prayer is dependent upon it. It prompts the highest thanksgiving, for it proves that God is and reveals Him as He is: we get glimpses of His character and glory which are the inspiration of gratitude. To know what God is, is of far more consequence than to know what He does. He is love, and therefore all His outgoings are lovely and loving: the stream is as the spring.

We have seen that to realize the divine presence leads to most heart-searching contrition and confession, because in the light of His purity and holiness sin's enormity and deformity are most clearly seen; and in the contrast of the glory of His goodness our unworthiness and ungratefulness become awfully apparent. In like manner, when the mind is filled with new views of God, of His

truth and grace, and the reality and verity of His promise, supplications and intercessions become the confident appeals of those who "have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him."

There is thus no side or aspect of true prayer which this vision of God in the closet does not touch. Contemplation of God compels contemplation of self; a new sense of destitution, degradation, depravity; a deeper contrition, a sincerer confession; a more importunate entreaty; a new repentance toward God, a new faith in God, a new separation unto God, a new power with God.

Prayer in its highest reach, is worship—worth-ship—ascribing worth to God, describing His worth in adoring praise, inscribing His worth on the forefront of the miter, the palms of the hands, the door-posts of the house, the gates whereby we go out and in; keeping before us and others His infinite excellence. Worship is more than thanksgiving and praise, including both, but above both in adoration, the whole being going out to Him in devout words, or in groanings and raptures which cannot be uttered, the mute language of emotions and affections which find no adequate articulate utterance.

Worship is the form of prayer which echoes in the Apocalypse when the door is opened into heaven: "Thou art worthy, O Lord!" Redeemed throngs and angelic hosts, lost in

the vision of infinite excellence and worthiness, rest not day or night from such adoration. To get new apprehension and appreciation of these adorable perfections is the ideal of prayerful communion.

In the Twenty-ninth Psalm, the Psalm of Nature, all creation is figuratively viewed as God's temple, the vast cathedral where He is throned, and all the forces of the material universe are vocal with His praise. The boom of the great waters sounds the deep diapason, the gentle breezes breathe melodies, and the peal of the thunders rolls its pedal bass, while cyclones and whirlwinds add majesty to the chorus. Lightnings flash like electric lamps, and giant oaks and immortal cedars bow like worshipers. In this Psalm of Nature it is declared that " In his temple, everything doth shout, glory! "

To devout souls who abide in the secret chambers with God, the closet itself becomes another grand cathedral, where every power and faculty of body and mind, soul and spirit, shout " Glory! " Memory brings her grateful stores to lay them at God's feet; imagination, the poet and painter, weaves choicest tributes and paints glorious pictures, as aids to faith; reason, the logician, constructs its most eloquent arguments to set forth God's claim on universal homage and love; the understanding, overawed before the infinite Mind, can only mutely confess its own insig-

nificance; conscience, the judge, pronounces Him perfect in all moral beauty; the will, the sovereign of man, lays down its imperial scepter at His feet who is alone worthy to rule; and affection, despairing of ever responding fully to such perfect love, breaks her alabaster flask and fills the whole house with the odor of her anointing. It is the closet's revealings that prompt us to cry, "Who is like, O Lord, unto thee!"

Our Lord's first lesson on prayer, is, therefore, Enter into thy closet. The first rung in the ladder of ascent is faith in the actuality, reality, verity of the divine existence. As the primary condition of prayer, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Of what use indeed to pray—nay, what but an affront, rather than an approach, to God—if we do not believe that He exists; and what is the closet for, if not to cultivate those spiritual senses which alone can perceive and receive Him?

Let us not dismiss this primary lesson without once more recalling and impressing its central truth, that communion with God is the essential secret of all holiness of character, conduct and service; and that meditation on the divine character and perfections prepares us not only for prevailing supplication but for reception of divine blessing. Let us think of the secret chamber as a place of vision—of

contemplation of God, making possible new impressions, discoveries into His nature, revelations of His goodness, impartations of His power. Thus it comes to pass that before we call He answers, and while we are yet speaking He hears. Communion proves mutual—both an outgo, and an income—a voice that answers as well as a voice that cries.

What a new factor in our spiritual life would such prayer prove!

The most devout find it not only profitable but natural to make the first exercise in closet devotion mute meditation. The prayer of Habakkuk hints that this is becoming to all true worship:

> "The Lord is in his holy temple!
> Let all the earth keep silence before him."

So, when, in the Apocalypse, that vision of the prayers of saints in the golden censer is about to be disclosed, the mysterious announcement which precedes it is:

> "There was silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour,"

as though such silence were the only fit prelude and preparation for a revelation of such magnificence and significance.

God is here; but what if I know it not? Let me tarry till I do know it. Then how much added power will come into my communing, and with what new anointing shall I go forth to life's work and witness and warfare!

PLUMMER

CHRISTIAN UNITY

## ALFRED PLUMMER

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## CHRISTIAN UNITY

ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D.

*"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd."*—John 10 : 16.
*"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*—John 13 : 34-35.

THE second of these passages tells us the necessary result of the fulfilment of the prediction and promise made in the first. When all the sheep have been gathered in and they have become one flock under one Shepherd, then the component members of the flock will find that their relation to the Shepherd involves a similar relation to one another. Love, especially on the Shepherd's part, is the bond which connects each one of them with the Shepherd—a love so strong, that He is ready to die for them: love, therefore, is the bond which must unite each member of the flock with his fellows, and in this each ought to aim at imitating the love of the Shepherd.

But perhaps, with almost equal truth, we might reverse this, and make the mutual love

not the result of the oneness of the flock, but the means of producing the oneness. Christ predicts that a time will come when the sheep who are not in the fold will be united with those who are in the fold, and that they will become one body, with Him at its head. And we may say that, when He gives to His followers the new commandment to love one another, even as He has loved them, He is telling them how to become one flock under Himself.

Perhaps it does not matter much which we regard as cause, and which as effect. The important point is, that the two facts are indissolubly connected by some law of divine causation. If there is love such as His there will be unity, and if there is unity under Him there will be love. Consequently, the presence of either fact may, in proportion to the fulness of its presence, be taken as evidence of the presence of the other; and, what is an equally important influence for our guidance, the absence of either fact may, in proportion to the completeness of its absence, be regarded as evidence of the absence of the other. If there is no love there will be no vital unity, and unless there is vital unity there will be no real love.

Unity, not uniformity. The two things are widely different, and either may exist without the other. Indeed, it may be doubted whether uniformity is not more of a hindrance than a help to unity. Uniformity is certainly a seri-

ous limitation of liberty; and liberty is the soil in which living unity is likely to flourish. Liberty is a sign of the presence of God's Spirit; "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" and where the spirit of the Lord is not, neither the unity which Christ promised, nor the love which He commanded, is likely to spring up.

And it is very unfortunate that, in one of the two texts which we are considering, our Bibles have made us familiar with a mis-translation, which seems to imply that Christ promised, and therefore enjoined, uniformity, when He does nothing of the kind. The Authorized Version makes Him say that, when the sheep which are not of this fold are brought, "there shall be one fold, one shepherd." What He does say is, that, when the others are brought, "they shall become one flock, one shepherd." Few corrections made in the Revised Version are more important than this. The mistake originated in Jerome's translation, where we have the same Latin word to represent two different Greek words. Wyclif followed him; and, although Tyndale and Coverdale corrected the error, the Authorized Version unfortunately followed Wyclif. Christ says nothing about there being one fold, which would imply uniformity: what He promises, and encourages us to work for and to pray for, is "one flock," in which there may be large measures of diversity along with the essential

unity of belonging to one and the same Shepherd.

It is impossible to estimate the mischief that has been done by this unhappy substitution of " fold " for " flock " in this important text. Throughout the Middle Ages, few people in Western Europe knew Greek, and Jerome's Vulgate led them to believe that Christ had used the word " fold " in both places, and that He had inculcated a doctrine, which the change of word was perhaps intended to exclude. The doctrine, that the sheep not in the fold must be brought in, until there is one fold, with all the sheep penned within it, gave immense support to the claims of the Roman Catholic Church to be the one church, outside which there is no salvation. What Christ says is that those outside the then existing fold, equally with those who were in the fold, shall become one flock, of which He is the Shepherd. Christ had come to break down " the wall of partition " between the Jewish Church and the Gentiles. In the gospel, the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to cease, and the salvation, which had been offered first to the Jew, became the common inheritance of all.

In what sense was the command which Christ gave to His followers, to love one another, " a new commandment? "

It may be said to be as old as the human race, a fundamental instinct, known even to

the heathen. Wherever human beings lived together, the obligation to mutual affection existed, and was attested by inward promptings, of which each was conscious, and by inward reproaches, whenever the law of mutual affection was grossly violated, as by grievous injury or murder. Even to the Gentile, whose life was often one long transgression of it, the commandment to love his fellows was not, in the strictest sense, new.

Still less was it new to the Israelite. Every well-instructed Jew knew that it stood written in the book of Leviticus: "Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If the obligation to love one's fellow-man was as old as the human race, the obligation to love him as oneself was as old as Judaism. It lies at the basis of many of the minute ordinances of the Jewish code.

What then does our Lord mean by calling it new?

First, it had been promulgated afresh, and in much clearer language. The original instinct of mutual affection, born in heaven and renewed in Paradise, had long since been almost forgotten. Even by those who dimly remembered it, and at times feebly recognized it, it was constantly ignored. In most men, other instincts far more congenial to man's fallen will, had stifled it or driven it out of

court. Its faint whisperings were scarcely heard among the strident voices of selfishness and passion. A Plato or a Seneca might here and there suggest precepts of self-restraint and benevolence. But "what were they among so many?" And what chance had they against the self-indulgence which generations of practise had stereotyped into a habit, and which philosophers had formulated into a system?

Nor did the Jew need a new proclamation of the law of love much less than the heathen did. The Jew had so narrowed the scope of the command to love his neighbor, and had so overlaid it with qualifications and exceptions, that the word of God was made of none effect. He was quick to raise the previous question: "And who is my neighbor?" And when it was evident that, at any rate, a man's own parents must be considered as among his neighbors, there was the monstrous device of Corban to free him from obligation. And, as regards all mankind outside Judaism, the divine command had been not merely evaded, but reversed, by the unholy addition, "hate thine enemy."

But Christ's law of love was new for other reasons than because it had been published anew with greater clearness and emphasis. It was not merely the old instinct of our unfallen nature, dragged from oblivion, and quickened into new life. It was not merely

the old Jewish precept, freed from glosses and perversions, and set forth once more in its original simplicity and comprehensiveness. It was all this; but it was a great deal more. It was the old instinct, the old precept, so transfigured, enlarged, and glorified, as to be indeed "a new commandment"; new in its extent; new in its sanction. It was no longer the old standard of loving one's neighbor as oneself. It was no longer the old sanction of loving him, because God would punish us if we did not. "Even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another": that is the new standard; that is the new sanction. Not the measure of our love for ourselves is to be our standard, but the measure of Christ's love for us. Not fear of God's judgments, not even obedience to His commands, is to be the mainspring of our love, but love itself. His love is to kindle our love; and the newborn fire is to know no limit but that of the fire that kindled it. "Even as I have loved you." In determining our duty to others, it is not enough to ask, "What, if our positions were reversed, should I wish them to do to me?" That is a very practical and useful question: it will help to clear the ground. But it is not the final question; and it may lead to serious mistakes; for we sometimes wish others to do to us what would be anything but beneficial. The final and the safe question is this: "What would Jesus Christ have me to do?"

And, when we have answered it, and find our selfish wills shrinking back from the answer, let us confront them with another question: "What has Jesus Christ done for me? What is He still doing for me?" "Even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Let us ask ourselves what we are doing towards the fulfilment of the divine promise, "one flock, one shepherd," and the fulfilment of the divine command," that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." It is a test question. Nay, by the declaration of Christ Himself, it is the test question. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This is the true note of the Church; not miracles; miracles are no absolute test of truth; "there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect;" not formularies nor discipline, for both of these may change, and a past discipline may be a present heresy; not numbers, numbers are no test of truth; truth may be on the side of an Athanasius or a Galileo against the large majority of Christians. The ultimate absolute test is love. Where is the man who loves his neighbors, loves his opponents, and loves them because Christ has loved him, and as Christ has loved him? There, in the noblest form, is the true Christian.

What have we done, what are we doing day

by day, to produce this character in ourselves? What are we doing to produce that peace and unity among Christians, which depends, not upon uniformity of worship, or identity of dogma, but upon fervency of love? What are we doing to make mankind, and especially those with whom we come most closely in contact, healthier, happier, and holier? Those of us who keep any kind of watch over our thoughts, and words, and actions will hardly be able to reply to questions such as these in a way that would produce solid self-satisfaction.

Those unworthy suspicions of the motives of others; those pitiful jealousies of our neighbor's advancement; that diabolical gloating over what brings shame or loss to others—are thoughts of this kind quite unknown to us? And then, those impatient rejoinders, which seem to imply that the whole world is bound to satisfy us; those outbursts of anger, when our wills have been crossed; those harsh criticisms of the conduct of other people; that readiness to repeat what is discreditable to our neighbor, without any certainty that it is true, or that any good can come of repeating it—can we honestly plead "not guilty" to such things as these? And if we made even a rough calculation of the amount of time and energy we day by day expend upon unselfish attention to the wants of others, and the amount which we devote to the promotion of

our own personal interests and pleasures, what kind of a balance sheet could we present to our consciences and to God? How many of our prayers are directed towards alleviating the sufferings and strengthening the characters of others rather than towards getting our own personal wants supplied? We often read newspapers as a mere amusement; and among the things that we find interesting are the records of the calamities, and it may be the disgrace, of other people. How callously we read it all, with scarcely a moment's sympathy, and altogether without even a momentary prayer for those whose sufferings have been a pastime to us!

In short, the love of Christ does not constrain us, does not fence us in, so as to keep us from squandering upon self those affections and energies which ought to be devoted to the service of others; and thus the divine law of love is only fitfully and feebly fulfilled by us, if at all. We look perhaps with indignation upon the animosities which separate class from class, and with contempt upon the controversial bitterness which divides Christian from Christian. But we forget how largely our own lack of the spirit of love and unity has contributed towards perpetuating the obstacles, which still hinder the realization of the divine ideal of "one flock, one Shepherd."

PORTER

THE SIGNS OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF MAN

## FRANK CHAMBERLIN PORTER

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# THE SIGNS OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF MAN

PROF. FRANK C. PORTER, D.D.

*"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. . . . If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk."*—Gal. 5 : 22, 23, 25.

WHERE ought we to look for the hand of God in our world? What are the proper signs of His presence? What are the things that belong to Him and are His witnesses to us? Such questions often perplex us. The supernatural seems to have vanished from a world in which science teaches us to look for law, in which many mysteries, once awe-inspiring, have been explained away, many powers once unaccountable and uncontrollable have been bound and set to do us service. In no earlier age has the merely extraordinary had so little power to stir religious feelings and call forth religious faith as in ours. What is to become of religion, we may ask ourselves, when we are made incapable of seeing in any temple the special abode of God, or in any rite His special presence and deed, or in any living man a peculiar knowledge of God or the possession of an authentic calling to speak and act for Him, or in any book a

fully miraculous quality as God's literal and inviolable word, or in any single, momentary experience the unique and epoch-making intervention of the divine Spirit?

These questions press so hard upon us, that some are inclined to seize upon the remaining mysteries of life, the unexplained residuum, or some new wonder that science has not yet reduced to order and simplicity, and to say that there is something supernatural left in the world after all; we will fasten our faith to that, and will still believe in God and soul and immortality. Some one somewhere has seen what the senses could not have imparted, therefore God is, and our hope is not vain. Some one was inwardly warned and escaped an imminent danger, therefore there is a divine providence. Some one has suddenly risen from a long sickness, therefore the world is not all matter and law, but there is a divine Spirit in it. So some are saying. But others feel that if God is to be seen only in out of the way corners of the world which science has not yet explored He will soon disappear altogether; and that the only refuge for religious faith is to find God everywhere and in everything. The universe is, throughout, His work, His self-expression. The whole world is God Himself thinking and energizing. The elements and forces of the material world are the energy of His will. The continuity of nature, the evolution of natural and human

history, are the orderly and purposeful operations of His reason.

Is this popular pantheism the best that we can do if we are unable to resort to miracle as evidence of God? The divinity of the universe as it is, is a doctrine that presents difficulties to the mind, and is still less satisfying to the heart. It may be a sufficient gospel to a few poetic and philosophic souls, but to the average man it would mean, I fear, the evaporation of any living faith in God, and the justification of worldliness in ideals and in conduct.

But we are not shut up to a choice between these two opposite ways of looking for God. There is another way of which one of the greatest men in the history of religion is a prophet, the apostle Paul, and for which one of the greatest words in the language of religion is the expression, the word Spirit.

If we were obliged to classify Paul as either a supernaturalist or a pantheist, we should no doubt put him in the former category. But he does not use the word supernatural; he uses the word Spirit; and if we set out to learn of him where and how God is to be seen and felt by us, we shall soon discover how much better for the purposes of religion the word Spirit is.

To us, I fear, the word spirit is vague if not unreal. This is partly because Greek and Hebrew elements are mixed in our idea of the

word. In Hebrew, spirit was the everyday word for wind. It was also used in the sense of breath. The Spirit of God was, therefore, the wind or the breath of God. It was not, as the Greeks were inclined to think of it, a refined substance, or ether, that penetrated all things and filled the universe; but rather an unseen but mighty force, the wind which comes and goes as it will, but has power to sweep all before it; the breath which is the mysterious sign and power of life. So the Spirit of God is simply the working power, the living, and live-giving presence of God in human life. It would be proper to ask a Greek philosopher what the spirit is in its nature; but Paul was a Hebrew, and the only question that can rightly be asked of him is, What does the Spirit do? What are the operations and effects of this divine energy? Paul is quite ready with his answer. The supreme effect of the Spirit, that is the supreme work of God's power in the world, is Christianity itself, and the supreme embodiment of the Spirit or presence and power of God is Christ.

We ask what we are to think of in order to give concreteness and reality to our conception of this vague word spirit. A Greek would tell us to think of ether, and perhaps to add to this the idea of energy, and to this the idea of reason; a Hebrew would have us think of the wind and the breath of life; but Paul,

Hebrew though he was, tells us to think of Jesus Christ. By the resurrection, he affirms, Christ became life-giving Spirit. The Lord Christ is the Spirit, he boldly declares; and he often uses the strange phrase "in Christ Jesus" in place of the familiar phrase "in the Spirit," to describe the life that is lived preeminently in the presence and by the indwelling power of God. They are mistaken, then, who think that we must get out of the natural order of things to find the divine; and they are equally mistaken who say that we can see God only in the universe as a whole. The divine is to be seen in a person, a historical character, and is to be experienced as the power of that person in us and over us.

But perhaps this definition of the Spirit as Jesus Christ is to us only a new enigma. Is Paul meaning to describe the metaphysical nature of the exalted Christ? No, not that; certainly not that primarily and chiefly. Paul is still a Hebrew, and when he says, "the Lord is the Spirit," he is speaking not in terms of substance and nature, but in terms of power and effect. So our proper question again is, by what effects then does Jesus Christ show Himself to be the Spirit, the presence and power of God in human life. Paul is ready and definite in his reply to this question also; and I believe, that in the things in which Paul saw the chief effects of the Christ-spirit in the life of men we may still find our

best evidence of God and our most living sense of His presence.

In the first place Paul found in the Christian confession of faith a work of the divine Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. This Christian confession contains two great articles, the Fatherhood of God, and the Lordship of Christ. It is the divine Spirit, then, that enables us to call God, Father. "Because ye are sons God sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." These familiar words do not mean to us all that they should mean. "Abba" is the word "Father" in the mother tongue of Jesus. It is the very word with which He spoke to God: the word in which His inmost faith was summed up; the word His disciples caught from His lips and were taught by Him to use. The word contains in itself the religion of Jesus. Surely there is no more sacred word in all human speech than the word "Abba." Had no one ever called God, Abba, before? Yes and no. In the way and in the sense in which Jesus used it, no! It can be so used only by one who feels and knows that he is a son of God, and it became the characteristic first cry of those who became sons of God through Jesus Christ. No wonder that even Greek-speaking Christians used the word which Christ used, imitating the very accents of His voice, though it was a foreign tongue, when they received from Him the knowledge that

God was a father and the power to call Him their Father. No wonder that to Paul this was a divine power, beyond the capacity of man, a work of the Spirit. That men can call God, Father, can know that they are sons of God, is a wonder in human history, a thing beyond the bounds of the natural and the human. That is what Paul means by saying that it is the Spirit in our hearts that cries "Abba." If this universal Christian confession of the Fatherhood of God does not seem to us anything supernatural then it may be that our idea of the supernatural is mistaken. We are looking for it in outward or lower regions, not where it surely lies, in the supreme experiences of the heart. Or it may be that our own sense of sonship and of the Fatherhood of God is indeed nothing extraordinary. Then let Paul's sense of the divineness of the power which alone can enable the human heart really to say "Father" to its God, rebuke our too easy conventional confession.

The second element in the Christian confession seemed to Paul no less wonderful, no less divine, than the first. No one, he declares, can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Spirit of God. If the word "Abba" summed up the religion of Jesus, the confession that Jesus is Lord was the foundation and sum of early apostolic Christianity. It is often referred to by Paul as the distinctive and sufficient Christian

creed. If it is one half of the Christian religion to share with Jesus the sense of sonship, and to use with Him the word Father; it is, Paul would say, the other half to bow in reverence and worship before this Jesus whose sonship we share. To imitate Him as the ideal man, and at the same time to be humble before Him as the manifestation of the divine, is the nature of Christianity. Hardly less wonderful in human history than Christ's consciousness of God which the word Abba contains, is this early exaltation of the man, Jesus, even by those who had known Him as a familiar friend, to the place of Lordship. How out of the lowly life and despised death of Jesus, grew the confident and conquering faith of the apostolic age in the divine exaltation and kingly rule of Christ? It is a puzzle before which historians, the more deeply they study it, are perplexed and baffled the more. It is natural that Jesus should have gained and kept the love and the reverence of men but their worship of Him rose above what was natural. It did not seem natural to Paul himself, and he did not establish and defend it by rational argument. It seemed to him a supernatural thing, a work of the Spirit of Christ Himself upon men. That is what he meant by saying that no one can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.

If our own belief that Jesus is Lord does not seem to us supernatural, a work of God,

then it may be that our idea of the supernatural is perverse or unworthy; that it is easier for us to use the word of what is inexplicable and mysterious in things of sense, than in the things of the inner life; or it may be that our belief in Christ's Lordship is really not extraordinary, but simply an easy acquiescence in words taught us from our youth, in ideas current in our circle. If so, Paul's teaching that no one can call Jesus Lord but by the Spirit of God, should rebuke our easy faith and reveal its shallowness. Let us determine to make Christ in truth the divine Lord of our lives until His mastery of us becomes in us, as it has become in others, a power effecting a more than natural, a more than human transformation. Then we shall have in ourselves and give to others that evidence of the divine for which we ask.

By the side of the Christian confession of faith Paul puts the Christian hope as a thing divine in human life, a work and evidence of the Spirit. This also has two sides. Because of Christ we hope for the coming of the kingdom of God, and also for an immortal life with God.

Why should we expect that righteousness and peace and joy will at last prevail on earth? Why should we expect, as Paul did, that even the hardness and sin of men, the unbelief of the Jews, and the idolatry and immorality of the heathen, should all somehow

end, should even, in the divine plan, contribute to their own ending, and bring to pass the reign of God? Why should we have faith that the whole creation is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God? It is God who implants this hope in the human heart, hope for that which we see not, hope for that of which the things we see give no convincing evidence. And this hope itself is a great creation of the divine Spirit, the Spirit of Christ in the world. Ever since He taught men to pray, "Thy kingdom come," Christians have more and more believed in a future time when God's will shall be done on earth as in heaven.

But the other side of the Christian hope is no less a wonder, a sign of God in the world. It is the Spirit in men that is the power of faith in immortality. Surely the hope of an immortal life is a wonderful thing in this world of ours. Nature knows nothing of it. Our senses, our experiences, tell us of nothing but death. So long as Christ creates in men a confident and joyful hope in an eternal life, surely we may not say that there is nothing supernatural in the world. And if our own hope of immortality is too hesitant and vague to seem to us more than a human wish, should we not pray that the Spirit of the immortal Christ may dwell more fully in us, that we may share the experience of those to whom the eternal life has been a glad certainty, a quite

unearthly light upon the dark places of human life.

But when men hope they also pray; and to Paul true prayer was itself proof of the reality of Him to whom it is addrest. Prayer is more than human aspiration. At its heights it is a divinely given power. The Spirit helps our human weakness, praying in us and for us. Is there not indeed in the true prayer of a trustful soul something that does not belong to nature, or by nature to men? And if our prayer is not to ourselves or to others an evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit of God, are we not to be blamed?

In the third place, the Christian character and life, the Christian love and service, were to Paul divine, and furnished convincing evidence of the presence of God in His world. Perhaps the energy with which Paul affirmed the absolute incapacity of men to do right by any exercise of their natural powers may seem to some of us excessive. Perhaps we may feel that his conviction that apart from Christ all men are in hopeless bondage to sin and death goes beyond the power of Christian experience to verify, perhaps beyond the intention of Jesus Himself. But we cannot but admire without reserve and with true reverence his prophetic insight into the divine quality and source of the Christlike character. Our admiration will increase when we put this discovery of Paul over against the common

Jewish and Christian ideas as to the gifts and performances that best deserved to be called effects of the divine Spirit, signs of the presence of God.

It was common in Paul's day, and was especially characteristic of the early Christian communities, to look for the divine in what struck the senses or amazed the mind as a thing of superhuman power or inexplicable mystery. It was not the Corinthian church only that put the highest value on the ecstatic and unintelligible speaking with tongues. The miraculous was everywhere taken to be the proper evidence of the divine. Paul was by no means a modern scientific questioner of miracle. He took for granted both the fact and its validity as a sign and proof of the divine Spirit. But Paul was more than a miracle-worker and a man of ecstasies and visions. All these things were in him controlled by moral ideals, tested and checked by moral uses and values. Nothing is newer and nothing greater in Paul than this, that he knew how to turn the mighty tide of enthusiasm of the first Christian age into moral channels; to make of it the power of inner character and of outgoing service.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." These words are so familiar and self-evident to us that we forget that Paul was the one who created this use of

the word Spirit. It is to Paul that we owe what he owed to Jesus, the knowledge that these simple but supreme human virtues are the greatest work of God, the supreme evidence of Him in human life. When Paul says that these human qualities of character are the fruit of the Spirit, he does not mean that they are excellent; he means that they are superhuman in quality and in source; he means that we men are not in possession of them by nature and cannot get possession of them by our own efforts. He does not mean so to change the common meaning of the word Spirit as to say that we are to see its operation in common rather than in uncommon things. He is not moving in the direction of pantheism, and looking for the divine in things as they are. Rather he is revealing the uncommonness and the wonder of the Christlike character. Paul found, as Jesus did, that the Jews with all their zeal for righteousness did not set their ideal high enough, or make the attainment of it hard enough. The hardest and the highest thing in the world is the perfect rule of love in a human heart and life. Paul would teach us that nothing deserves to be called a work of God, a fruit of the Spirit, more than this; and indeed that without this nothing whatever, no talent however rare and marvelous, no deed however mighty, has the stamp of divinity upon it. Nothing but this is the meaning of the thirteenth chapter of

First Corinthians. No gifts were more valued than the gifts of tongues, of prophecy, of the knowledge of mysteries, of the power to work miracles. No deeds were so admired as unbounded charity, and the faith and courage of the martyr. But without love Paul declares all these, even the last, to be nothing. Love is the supreme power and sign and wonder of God in the world. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of love. Paul does not indeed mean that love is so complete a miracle in the human heart, God so entirely its author, that we have no moral choice to make in the matter, no struggle to undergo, no victory to win. Having made miracle in the highest sense moral, he does not half lose his achievement by making morals in the old sense miraculous. He has far too sound a moral nature for that. He knew indeed that the new power which he felt in himself and saw in others to live a life of love was no human power. Yet he knew that it was now fully his own. It was not a power of God over him compelling him against his will to obey the law of love. It was the power of God in him making him able and free to love. It is the evil power of selfishness which remains a power not ourselves that enslaves us; but "where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." The idea that because Christ is in us the power of righteousness we are therefore to make no moral effort, is a complete perversion of Paul's thought; and when

someone drew that false inference from his words he rejected it with all the energy of his being. He warns Christians against one-sided trust in Christ as often as against one-sided trust in themselves. The Christian walk is still the urgent task of the Christian believer, not less but rather more because it is the work in us of the Spirit of Christ. That Spirit works not against but only in and with the moral will. "Walk by the Spirit," Paul commands. "Be led by the Spirit." "If we live by the Spirit by the Spirit let us also walk." The divine miracle of Christian character is a reality for faith to recognize, but also, no less, an ideal for effort to actualize. Here, in the Christlike character, Paul would say, we are to see the supreme deed and most convincing evidence of God in the world; and therefore we are bound so to live that this presence of God shall be actual and manifest among men. Divine love, "so united to human faculties that it is itself become a principle of a new nature" is the supreme work of God in the world.[1]

If it does not seem so to us; if neither in ourselves nor in others does the Christian life seem anything extraordinary, anything surpassing human effort, and requiring the supernatural for its explanation, then it may be that we fail to recognize the supernatural when we see it at work, because we are looking

[1] Jonathan Edwards.

for the wrong thing; or it may be that in our own Christian character and in the Christian life about us there is indeed nothing extraordinary, nothing, or far too little, that cannot be well accounted for by the most human and natural of things, by love of ease, conformity to habit and custom, desire for respect and influence, in a word, the love of self. Or perhaps there is so little freedom and joy in our doing of what is right, so little sense of power in our conquest of weakness and sin, our choice of harder instead of easier paths, of the good of others rather than our own, that our virtue seems a painful effort rather than an expression of divine power. If so let us learn from Paul to wonder more at the power of the Spirit of Christ to renew human lives, and let us not rest in the effort to follow in the steps of our Lord Jesus until we feel His love become in us what it was in Paul, what it has been in multitudes of lives, a truly unearthly power.

But the Christian life, like the Christian confession and the Christian hope, has two sides. We have looked at it as a matter of individual character; but it is to be regarded also as a common character and a united service of the world by the Christian community. To this common life and work the Christian contributes not only by his possession of the characteristic Christian character but also by his peculiar talents. All Christians have in-

deed the one and the same Spirit, but the gifts of the Spirit are not alike to all. The Spirit makes all believers Christian, but it makes each one a particular sort of a Christian, equipped with a special talent, put in a particular place, responsible for a special work.

Christianity is not in Paul's view a purely individual matter; it is a community, an organization; and God has in its production a plan and an operation for the whole as well as a gift of salvation and life for the individual soul. Men are not only new creatures in Christ, but they are one body in Christ. They have gifts differing according to the grace given them, of higher and lower honor, but equally necessary, equally inspired. Gifts of nature are to the religious mind gifts of God. And if a man is endowed with the gift to teach or to rule, to comfort or to heal, and if the Spirit of Christ possess him and heighten such natural aptitudes, directing them into the service of the Christian community, then Paul teaches us to call such a man inspired to teach or to rule, to comfort or to heal. Paul will know of no Christian who is without a special capacity to serve the Christian community, and he will know no such service however simple and lowly which is not divine in its character, a supernatural gift.

How blind we are to the signs of the supernatural all about us, when we test our sight by the penetrating vision of Paul. Let us rise to

his lofty point of view and not fear or fail to see in our gift, however slight by outward measurements, in our calling, however inconspicuous, a divine gift and call.

There are indeed differences of value in the divinely given powers of men, but Paul found that men were apt to measure their value by wrong tests. Showy and striking talents are not the best. The best are those that are most useful to the community, that contribute most to its order, for God does not love confusion, and to its upbuilding, for God wills a perfect human society. All the forces that work against the divisive rivalries and suspicions of men toward mutual helpfulness and common good Paul teaches us to look upon as divine forces, evidences of God in the world. This is the work of the one Spirit, which makes every man different in order that it may make all men one. The test of profit, of use, is to Paul only second to the test of love for the discerning of the presence of God in the world. Second it must indeed remain, for it is only love which overcomes antagonism and self-assertion and brings the many powers of men into this truly wonderful harmony. It is by no accident that the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians stands between the twelfth and the fourteenth in which the special gifts are discussed. It is right to desire the greater of the gifts, but there is something greater than all gifts, without which the greatest of them

is worthless. Prophecies, tongues, knowledge, pass away. Love gives them their worth and their power. They were given for the service of others, and love is the soul of all service. Love is the Spirit of Christ. The one common work of the Spirit is greater than its many uncommon works, and remains when they pass, supreme, immortal, supernatural, the greatest thing in the world, the most divine thing in man.

If our own special capacity to do a special work for the Christian community does not seem to us in any degree wonderful or supernatural, Paul, I am sure, would teach us to look for the supernatural in more common and lowly places than is our wont. To see the divine in any loving service should not be hard for those who have before their eye the gospel picture of Jesus, and are accustomed at least to profess that in Him divinity was manifested in a human life. But perhaps Paul also would find too little of the divine in our Christian service, and would summon us to exercise the gift we are neglecting until in however humble an office its supernaturalness shall stand revealed.

We began with the question where we are to look for God, what evidence of the divine the world contains. The answer which the great Christian prophet, Paul, finds and gives in the great word, Spirit, is this: The divine is in you, in your confession of God as Father and

of Christ as Lord, in your hope of a perfected humanity and of an immortal life with God, in your possession of a Christlike love, and in the significance of your task in the plan of the love of God. Where is the evident presence and power of God? It is in Jesus Christ. It should be in you. See that it is in you. Do not anxiously search for God in the outstanding retreating darkness of the universe, or in happy turns of fortune, or in strange and unexplained experiences. Do not look for Him in the world as it is. Look for Him in Christ and in what is like Christ. Make it true in yourselves by likeness to Him that God is manifest and at work in the world.

The New Testament writers are always turning our curious questions into practical duties. Is God in His world? Yes, if you will have it so, if you will undertake to make it so. For each of us the place of God's most immediate and demonstrable presence and work is our own inner life. There first, since if not there it makes little difference where else, there we must seek and find God. For us as for Paul the best name for the supernatural, the divine, is the Spirit of Jesus Christ and then the mind and life of those who have His spirit. The Christian character and life is the thing most divine in the world. If it is not so, we are at fault. We must see that it is so, and make it so. We should not need to look elsewhere for proof of God

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